Semiotics of the End

Essays on Capitalism and the Apocalypse

Alessandro Sbordoni

Semiotics of the End

Essays on Capitalism and the Apocalypse

Alessandro Sbordoni

SEMIOTICS OF THE END

ESSAYS ON CAPITALISM AND THE APOCALYPSE

ALESSANDRO SBORDONI

Afterword by

MATT BLUEMINK

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Earlier versions of the essays ‘Not With a Bang, But a Yawn’, ‘Violence Against the Imaginary’, and ‘Welcome to the Virtual Plaza’ were published in the British magazine Blue Labyrinths. Translations of the same essays into Italian were published in the magazines Charta Sporca and DROGA Magazine. Also, a translation of the first essay into German was published in the magazine NON.

Special thanks to Sophie Gaden, Geert Lovink, Franco Berardi, Giorgi Vachnadze, Leone Maria Kervischer, and Achim Szepanski.

CONTENTS

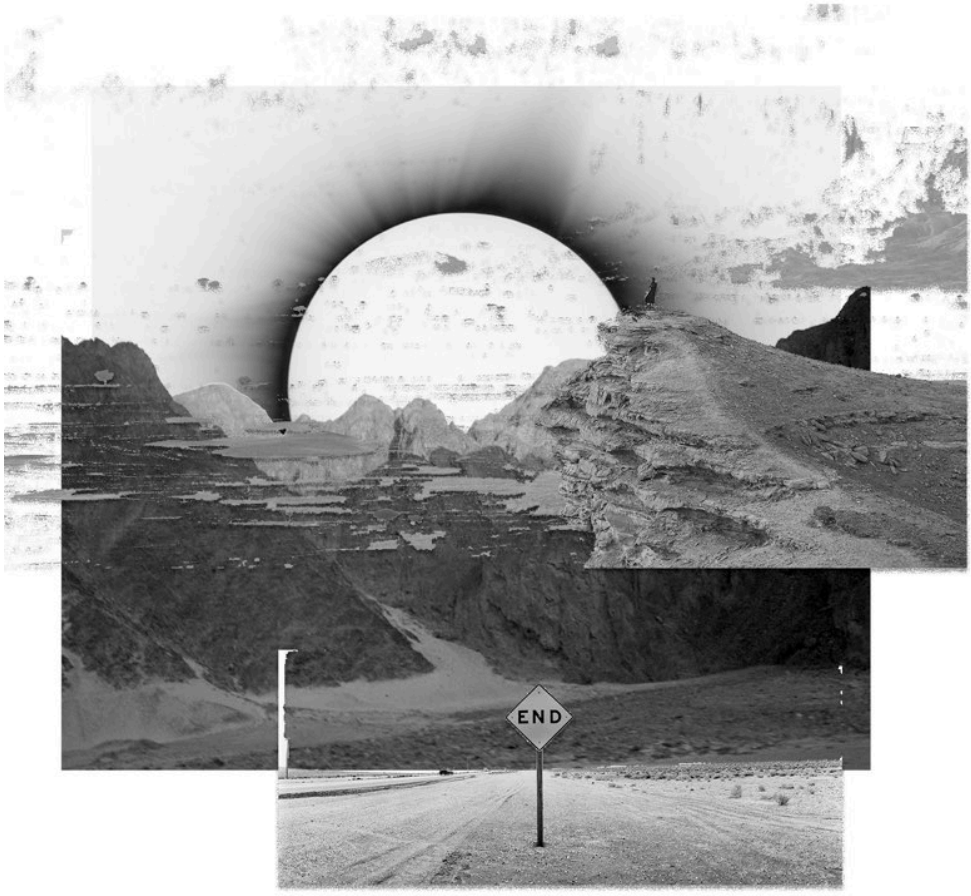
1. Not With a Bang, but a Yawn
2. Capitalism and Dark Media
3. After the End of All Things
4. Meltdown Now
5. Violence Against the Imaginary
6. Overdrive and Meaning
7. Doom Loop Forever
8. Technology Degree Zero
9. To Sleep, Perchance…
10. Welcome to the Virtual Plaza
11. The Backrooms
12. The Ghost in Architecture
13. Anti-Hauntology

Afterword: New Beginnings
Matt Bluemink

References
List of Illustrations
About the Author
About this book
Colophon

SEMIOTICS OF THE END

1 NOT WITH A BANG, BUT A YAWN


END

Dreams about the end of the world are no longer the fruits of despair and fear alone. They are also the frolics of boredom.

It is not only when the world is evil or ugly, but when it does not matter any longer whether the world exists or not that feverish dreams of destruction surge from the depths; it is amidst yawns, more often than whimpers and cries, that the world ends.

A friend once told me: ‘When I am bored, I would like to watch the world burn.’ The world thus ends, and it is just fantasy. That is because boredom does not really destroy anything, it does not create at all.

The Paradox of Boredom

As Byung-Chul Han writes in *The Burnout Society*, ‘deep boredom is the peak of mental relaxation. A purely hectic rush produces nothing new. It reproduces and accelerates what is already available.’[1] Boredom is pure repetition, reproduction without finality. If boredom does, in fact, produce dreams of the end, it is because the end turns out to have become impossible.

Everything is a copy. All days resemble each other. Week after week, it all repeats again. Then, a thought of creation or destruction. Boredom is thus eliminated; nothingness neutralizes mere repetition. A principle of nothingness is indeed necessary for both creation and destruction; it is when the temptation of nothingness overcomes the dullness of the here-and-now that creating and destroying become possible. Boredom then, since nothing new has been generated, repeats itself.

Dreams of the End

A new sort of nihilism is arising from the boredom that describes late capitalism. It is the nihilism according to which the end has lost its finality.

In a post from January 13, 2007, Mark Fisher argues that ‘we have ceased to imagine the end of the world just as surely as we have lost our ability to imagine the end of capitalism. Oddly, apocalyptic dread - so omnipresent during the Cold War - seems to have been extirpated from the popular unconscious. [...] If it is increasingly difficult to imagine alternatives to capitalism, that is because the world has already ended.’[2]

Disaster movies do not appeal to feelings of fear or anxiety about the future anymore. Instead, they aim at the elimination of boredom, successfully achieved through hyperstimulation. Films such as *Sharknado* or *Godzilla vs. Kong* are for children what pornography is for adults.

Dreams of the end are over. And it is not because of cynicism, but because of deep boredom: nothing is possible, because *nothing is impossible* anymore.

The dreams of the end told by disaster ‘porn’ movies represent the ultimate simulacrum. Representations of their own nothingness. Nihilism of the end.

‘The apocalypse is finished, today it is the precession of the neutral, of forms of the neutral and of indifference’[3] wrote Jean Baudrillard in 1981 *Simulacra and Simulation*. Forty years after the end, it is the apocalypse of the boring: the triumph of hyperstimulation, digital recombination, pure repetition without difference. And as the thought of the end has been neutralized, with it, the seduction of images perishes. It is the land of boredom. The yawn and the abyss.

Hypernothingness

The solution to the paradox of boredom is hypernothingness: nothingness that is more than creation and destruction, reality and simulation. If dreams of the end today still depend on reality and representation, in the realm of hypernothingness the end is *both possible and impossible*.

The screen is black. There is no sound except for the whispering of the wind. As the film *The Turin Horse* is about to reach its conclusion, it is as if the world and the screen both disappear. Another nothingness then enters the dream. An absolute difference is thus introduced within nothingness itself. It is the representation of a new nothingness, which neither creates nor destructs. Instead, it returns dream to sleep.

And yet, hypernothingness does not restore reality nor its nihilistic negation. Rather, it abolishes the difference between the real and the hyperreal, boredom and its eschaton.

It is the realization of boredom at the end of the world.

Zero, or the Sound of the End

The music industry is another apt example of the paradox of boredom and the nihilism of the end.

Once more, it is not hard to discover a pornographic approach to the imaginary of the end. ‘Sicker than the remix / Baby, let me blow your mind tonight,’ then the chorus: ‘I can’t take it, take it, take no more / Never felt like, felt like this before / Come on get me get me on the floor.’[4] This extract from Britney Spears’ lyrics of *Till the World Ends* follows a narrative of the end as consumerism without purpose, without finality. It is the catastrophe of meaning, where the end itself has become impossible since hyperstimulation and repetition have divested the end of its reality.

The future is no longer possible. The future does not exist except as the simulacra of consumption, hence the pornographies of desire.

Today the future does not exist any longer except as the reconfiguration of the past; ghosts of the past haunt the present via remixes, sequels, and remakes. The *new* almost does not mean anything anymore. Hyperstimulation and repetition already remove the possibility of the end. The paradox of boredom repostulates itself as long as nothing is created nor destructed. It is pure repetition without difference; the nothingness of the simulacra.

Again, the palliative against the nihilism of this culture of the end is hypernothingness.

A one-minute-long silence predates the end of The Caretaker’s album series *Everywhere at the End of Time*, partly dedicated to the memory of Mark Fisher, who disappeared in 2017. ‘The inability to distinguish the present from the past’[5] (Mark Fisher’s words about The Caretaker’s sound-

theory), produced by the remix and disfiguration of recordings from a long-forgotten past, now leaves space for hypernothingness.

But hypernothingness does not simply signify the end: it *creates* the end. In it, plenitude is abolished. The melancholia and nostalgia describing the recording fade away at last. Throughout this minute of hypernothingness, indifference is slowly converted into the atmosphere of the end itself.

There are no more sounds but wafts of nothingness.

The simulation of silence, rather than drawing the music to a close, further opens up a space for sleep and the ataraxy of the end. Boredom at the end of time. The hypernothingness of silence abolishes the difference between the representation of nothingness and nothingness itself, between deep listening and deep boredom.

Is it the sound of the end?

References

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994 (1981).

Fisher, Mark. 'The Damage is Done', *k-punk*, 13 January 2007, http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/2007_01.html.

—. 'No Future 2012', *k-punk*, 13 May 2008, http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/010368.html.

Godzilla vs. Kong (dir. Adam Wingard, 2021). Legendary Pictures.

Han, Byung-Chul. *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015 (2010).

Sharknado (dir. Anthony C. Ferrante, 2013). Syfy Films.

Spears, Britney. 'Till the World Ends', 2011, track 1, on *Femme Fatale* (New York: Jive), 2011, CD.

The Caretaker. *Everywhere at the End of Time – Stages 1-3* (Kraków: History Always Favours the Winners), 2017, 3 CDs.

—. *Everywhere at the End of Time – Stages 4-7* (Kraków: History Always Favours the Winners), 2019, 4 CDs.

The Turin Horse (dir. Béla Tarr and Ágnes Hranitzky, 2011). T. T. Filmműhely.

---

1 Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015 (2010), p. 13.

2 Mark Fisher, 'The Damage is Done', *k-punk*, 13 January 2007, http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/2007_01.html.

3 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994 (1981), p. 160.

4 Britney Spears, 'Till the World Ends', 2011, track 1, on *Femme Fatale* (New York: Jive), 2011, CD.

5 Mark Fisher, ‘No Future 2012’, *k-punk*, 13 May 2008, http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/010368.html.

2 CAPITALISM AND DARK MEDIA

The screen represents the design of a society in which everything is transparent and nothing is material anymore. At a point in which the technology of the screen is almost everywhere, reality itself cannot but disappear into the absurd design of simulacra.

The Design of Everyday Things reads: ‘With few pages left, we know the end is near. […] Electronic book readers do not have the physical structure of paper books, so unless the software designer deliberately provides a clue, they do not convey any signal about the amount of text remaining.’[1] Screen time is the latest view of eternity. There is no end to the information to be reproduced. As the end gets nearer, more is *yet to come*. And where the circular rolling of the volume and the flipping of a codex’s pages represented Antiquity’s and Christianity’s divergent views of time, the design of the screen, with its endless scrolling down, represents the techno-ideology of infinite consumption and reproduction exclusive to late capitalism.

The image of the display is always on view. This is its violence and obscenity. In order to exist, it reproduces itself endlessly. It is not possible to close the eyes any longer. There is always too much light.

The Light After the End

On Instagram, when all the content has been displayed on the screen, a message pops up (‘You’ve completely caught up’), which signals that more (sponsored) content is yet to come. There is also a hyperlink to ‘View older posts’: the ghosts of the past return to reproduce more and more of the present.

There is still light after the end.

After the end credits of *Avengers: Infinity War*, there is only more dematerialization in the streets of America, as more images from *Captain Marvel* take possession of the screen. After Captain Marvel’s departure from this world, there is still more light foreshadowing the future production of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, *Avengers: Endgame*. In the ending of *Avengers: Endgame*, the highest-grossing movie of all time, the dead return to the living image, after which, there is an advertisement for *Spider-Man: Far From Home*.

There is no end in sight to the expansion of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. There is no darkness after the semiological horizon of the multiverse. There is only more simulation, more repetition of the same.

The end itself is the sign of more reproduction. The screen is the impossibility of any references to the real. The screen *screens* the end. It is nothing more than the proliferation of more and more images. The phantom of reproduction does not end because there is nowhere to end. Jacques Derrida wrote: ‘there is no outside-text.’[2] There is no more off-screen either. There is no more darkness.

All there is is now made into an image in order to reproduce itself as such. It is put on display so that it can become a commodity and be

consumed again and again and again. What is not an image almost does not exist: its exhibition and reproduction value are zero.

Dark Medium

According to Eugene Thacker, the dark medium is a medium that functions *so well* that it mediates between two different ontological levels — the living and the dead, the human and the unhuman, the flesh and the ghostly. The dark medium, in other words, does not mediate between the image and the eye, but between the eye and the specters of the imaginary.

Peter Tscherkassky's short film *Outer Space*, like all of the Austrian film-maker's oeuvre, is made out of found footage from other films. In *The Entity*, a young woman is abused by an invisible and terrible monster. In Peter Tscherkassky's heavy editing of the feature-length film, however, the conflict between the main character and the spectral entity is transposed into the hyperviolence between the image and the medium itself. There is no more difference between the violence of the image and the violence made to the real. The film is an explosion after which whatever presents itself in the rests of the medium is just imaginary.

In half-light and fractured, staggering visuals, a young woman enters into a suburban house at night. As the door closes behind her, both the physical space and the surface of the projection begin to splinter, collapse and rupture. Spaces enclose and enfold, the female subject multiples and shatters across the screen, and the film itself screeches and tears as the sprockets and optical soundtrack violently invade the fictional world. […] The woman is sent smashing from wall to wall, her face splintering across screen, flashing in ghostly traces or exploding into numerous directions. At one point she dissolves on screen leaving an empty corridor, then suddenly she explodes again into the frame. Her screams are punctured by the scratches and glitches of the torn film, of the sprocket holes that bleed across the screen, or the mechanical groan of the optical soundtrack.[3]

The edited images are drawn and quartered with artificial light. Light abolishes mediation, ‘the film becomes so immediate that it overtakes and consumes the material and formal aspects of film itself, dovetailing into an antimediacy that ceases to visually or acoustically communicate at all.’[4] The light is now at its cruelest: it creates and disfigures all images, even itself. The screen violently flashes from black to white. Light and sound create and destroy the relation with the medium.

The screen itself is now imaginary. There is almost nothing left to see. *The young woman gazes into the darkness and the darkness stares back.*

The first time I watched this short film by Peter Tscherkassky, the light was dazzling. It was so bright that the black screen turned into a dark mirror. The negative reflection and reverberation made the imaginary appear to recede to infinity. There is no more image and the imaginary reproduces itself in the hypernothingness of the medium: the images finish and they do not stop finishing. There is almost nothing; the darkness is only imaginary.[5]

From the Image to the Imaginary

Giorgio Agamben writes in *From the Book to the Screen*: ‘Digital devices are not immaterial but founded on the obliteration of their own materiality: the screen “screens” itself, hides the page as support—that is, matter—in the page as writing, which has itself become immaterial or, rather, spectral—if by specter we mean something that has lost its body but also somehow preserves the form of its body.’[6]

The screen is that which, in order to function, makes itself *transparent*. It reproduces thus the illusion of its own immateriality.

The image is spectral. It is often nothing more than the virtualization of the reproduction of the machine.

The blank image is no longer the representation of the virtuality of creation but of reproduction itself. As a result, the device takes the place, or even takes *possession*, of subjectivity. ‘He who lets himself be captured by the “cellular telephone” apparatus—whatever the intensity of the desire that has driven him—cannot acquire a new subjectivity, but only a number through which he can, eventually, be controlled.’[7] The apparatus does not, then, reproduce a subject but the affirmation of her own negation.

There is no medium without a subject. And so, more and more the machine is like another subject and the subject like another machine. To think is almost not possible; the machine thinks in my stead. Technology reproduces more and more specters, and it makes a specter of the self that produces it. Dark media, instead, represent the return from negative subjectivity to the subject itself of negation. The practice of the dark media is an exorcism of control and immediacy.

The reproduction of the dark media is mediated by the imaginary; imagination is not transparent: *it is dark.* It does not *screen* the end.

Imagination is already the end of the image; it is the reproduction of new, imaginary reflections and reverberations.

References

Agamben, Giorgio. *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009 (2006).

—. *The Fire and the Tale*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Avengers: Infinity War (dir. Anthony J. Russo and Joseph Russo, 2017). Marvel Studios.

Avengers: Endgame (dir. Anthony J. Russo and Joseph Russo, 2019). Marvel Studios.

Captain Marvel (dir. Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, 2019). Marvel Studios.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997 (1967).

Fisher, Mark. *The Weird and the Eerie*, London: Repeater, 2016.

Graham, Rhys. '*Outer Space*: The Manufactured Film of Peter Tscherkassky', *Sense of Cinema* 12 (February 2001), https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2001/cteq/outer/.

Norman, Donald A. *The Design of Everyday Things. Revised and Expanded Edition.* Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2013 (1967).

Outer Space (dir. Peter Tscherkassky, 1999). P.O.E.T. Picture Production.

Spider-Man: Far From Home (dir. Jon Watts, 2019). Columbia Pictures, Marvel Studios, Pascal Pictures.

Thacker, Eugene. 'Dark Media', in Alexander R. Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark (eds) *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, 77–150.

The Entity (dir. Sidney J. Furie, 1982). American Cinema International.

---

1 Donald A. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things. Revised and Expanded Edition.* Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2013 (1967), p. 16.

2 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997 (1967), p. 158.

3 This synopsis of Peter Tscherkassky's *Outer Space* is an excerpt from Rhys Graham, '*Outer Space*: The Manufactured Film of Peter Tscherkassky', *Sense of Cinema* 12 (February 2001), https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2001/cteq/outer/.

4 Eugene Thacker, 'Dark Media', in Alexander R. Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark (eds) *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, 77–150, p. 111.

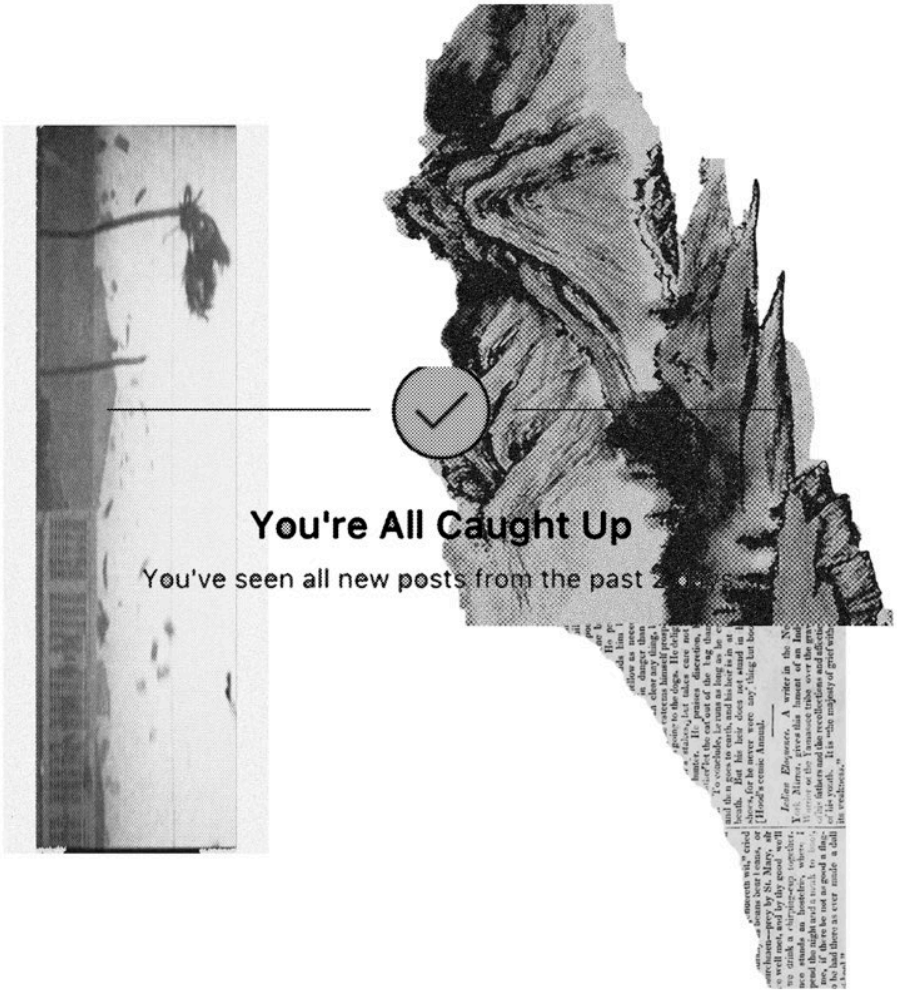
5 The dark medium of Peter Tscherkassky's *Outer Space* is just one of the three typologies described by Eugene Thacker (i.e., weird media, haunted media, dead media). According to Eugene Thacker, the weird medium represents a negative form of mediation. The weird, to quote Mark Fisher, is 'the presence of *that which does not belong*' (Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, London: Repeater, 2016, p. 61). In Peter Tscherkassky's *Outer Space*, however, the weirdness is the subject's relationship with the dark medium itself.

The medium of Peter Tscherkassky's *Outer Space* is analog but the analysis is here developed without reference to the difference between analog and digital forms of reproduction. The question about the difference between analog and digital media is discussed at the end of this book, §13 *Anti-Hauntology*.

6 Giorgio Agamben, *The Fire and the Tale*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa, Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2014, pp. 107–108.

7 Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009 (2006), p. 21.

3 AFTER THE END OF ALL THINGS



You're All Caught Up

You've seen all new posts from the past 2

In *The End of All Things*, Immanuel Kant argues that the end of all things does not derive from the end of time itself but only from the absence of change, whence something is going to be the same forever.

From the point of view of information theory, the information value of such a system is zero: the overall number of states of the system is equal to one. Even so, the reproduction of the system does not end. The end of all things, as revealed by the German philosopher, is without end. It is for ever and ever the repetition of the same.

According to Immanuel Kant, the infinite magnitude of the end 'is a representation which outrages the imagination.'[1] This is already the failure of understanding that is produced in the absence of any concept — and likewise, information. At the same time, the speculative paradigm in which the end of all things has to be thought is the relationship with a particular form of nothingness, a certain kind of failure of representation, and the ineluctable negation of the subject.[2]

But this nothingness, even in the horror-like form of absolute extinction and its antithetical representation, is not part of the future anymore; it is now and everywhere at the end of time.

All energy is wasted; the potentiality for change is infinitely approaching zero. It is the future as such, not the end, that is an abomination to the imagination. The eternity of the same makes it impossible to think about the absolute afterward: the future.

The Paralogism of the End

‘But why do human beings expect *an end* of the world *at all*?’[3] After the end — that is, here and now — the reply and the question are no longer the same (and more of the same). The question that reverberates after the end, rather, is of the form: ‘Why is it not possible to think about the world *after the end*?’ In contrast with the Kantian approach, the reply following this question is not just a form of speculation but the potentiality of imagination.

The potentiality of the imaginary is to produce another form of information and return another kind of logic to the system. It is to return the value zero of information to the meaningfulness of zeros, which is already the relationship with the future as such.

And ‘why must it always be a terrible end [...]?’[4] asks again *The End of All Things*. To which the reply, the Kantian joke: because the present time is execrable. The representation of the future is more often than not the critique of the present time. The great outside, the beyond, and its horror represent as often as not the impotentiality of thinking about the end of the capitalist system and its logic.[5]

Even more so, nothingness must go further than the system. Zero against more zeros, the imagination is always after the diagonals of the matrix. The imagination is played against the simulation. Meaning is more than the function of information.

In the second volume of the *Horror of Philosophy*, Eugene Thacker suggests reading the philosophy of Immanuel Kant from the diagnosis of the metaphysician’s depression. According to this reading, the logic of the imaginary and emotions is to be dominated by the logic (or the pathology) of reason. But what the philosopher of Enlightenment might not have considered is that reason might be the cause of depression. Reason itself —

like the techno-logic of the infosphere — in fact, works too fast and *too well*. So much so that the system of Immanuel Kant fails to find any meaning but, so often, just more of the machinery of capitalism. Depression is another part of the mechanics of capital — as in the phrase *economic depression*, where *depression* is not a metaphor but, rather, an example of pleonasm.

References

Kant, Immanuel. ‘The End of All Things’, trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, in Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (eds) *Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 (1794), 221–231.

Russell, John. ‘Abysmal Plan: Waiting Until We Die and Radically Accelerated Repetitionism’, *e-flux* 46 (June 2013), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/46/60096/abysmal-plan-waiting-until-we-die-and-radically-accelerated-repetitionism/.

Thacker, Eugene. *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 1*, London: Zer0 Books, 2011.

—. *Starry Speculative Corpse: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 2*, London: Zer0 Books, 2015.

---

1 Immanuel Kant, ‘The End of All Things’, trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, in Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (eds) *Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 (1794), 221–231, p. 227.

2 Eugene Thacker, *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 1*, London: Zer0 Books, 2011.

3 Immanuel Kant, ‘The End of All Things’, p. 224.

4 Immanuel Kant, ‘The End of All Things’, p. 224.

5 A similar argument was made by John Russell, ‘Abysmal Plan: Waiting Until We Die and Radically Accelerated Repetitionism’, *e-flux* 46 (June 2013), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/46/60096/abysmal-plan-waiting-until-we-die-and-radically-accelerated-repetitionism/.

4 MELTDOWN NOW

The future is hot. That is because capitalism is so hot that anything around it melts down.

In comparison to the word *meltdown*, the phrase *global warming* is a euphemism. Global warming, according to Timothy Morton, is the evaporation of the world and any relation to it into thin air. In contrast, meltdown is when everything melts into virtuality and abstraction, even time as such. Meltdown is always hotter and much, much faster.

The future is hot. Too hot and the future melts into the present. As a result, the so-called future is always already now. Culture melts down into the economy when it is 'triggered by the fractal interlock of commoditization and computers.'[1] Information takes the place of meaning; cybertime, the time of thoughts and feelings, melts into cyberspace, the time of processing and computation.

The real melts up into the hyperreal and the desert of the real gets its derogatory name.

At the same time, biology melts with politics and back it goes into the hot economy. Burnout and viral epidemiology: both signs that the system is heated up. Byung-Chul Han argued that a particularly unheimlich analogy between capitalism and COVID-19 is that both represent fatigue in their symptomatology.[2] Although, another even more viral analogy is: fever. The heat of the system that is either trying to kill you (with the imperatives of production) or the virus.

The meltdown virus reproduces itself via the past, and the future melts into the present. Following is Nick Land's theory-fiction text *Meltdown*, first presented at the University of Warwick in 1994*:* 'Meltdown: planetary china-syndrome, dissolution of the biosphere into the technosphere, terminal speculative bubble crisis, ultravirus [...]. It is poised to eat your TV, infect your bank account, and hack xenodata from your mitochondria.'[3] 'Metrophage: an interactively escalating parasitic replicator, sophisticating itself through nonlinear involvement with technocapitalist immunocrash.'[4]

The representation of the future (from 1994) is the return to the present (back into 2020 and fast-forward). Meltdown *today*: the high entropy of the infosphere, the tropical-like heat and hyper-fast service of Amazon, Inc. and its marketplaces, the trash and recycle of the end into the never-ending economics of reproduction, the hot fashion of the revolutionary cultures of the near past and the near future.

There is no more time. Hell, like capitalism, is damn hot. Financial, socio-cultural, biological, environmental meltdown: according to Slavoj Žižek, nothing more than the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.[5]

Exploit

Following the acceleration of speed in computer architecture, a security vulnerability, today known as Meltdown, enabled a user to read virtual memory in most computers built and sold since 1995. In 1994, more than two decades before Google's Project Zero finds out about the Meltdown attack, Nick Land's *Meltdown* was presented at the Virtual Futures conference at the University of Warwick. Much like the former security exploit, Nick Land's *Meltdown* exploits the acceleration of the speed of the system. But like any other exploit, meltdown is not just a reading instruction (read via speculative execution: the apocalyptical end of the flesh-and-blood subject and the reproduction of technocapitalist singularity), but first and foremost an information hazard about the ending of that techno-logical security system also known as capitalism.

Fiction as such is feed-backed into theory; the future is feed-backed into the present. Exploit the simulation. Feed back into the system.

The representation of nothingness is always information. More information is more heat. Too much heat into the system and information itself starts to melt into nothingness: it is the haze of theory. The haze makes it impossible to differentiate between what is an image and what is not, what is visible and what never is. The subjects then hide in the fog, in the gray mist between zeros and ones.[6]

Softwar

Warfare melts down into simulation. This is semiotic war or softwar: the economic war, the information war, the environmental war, the war to the virus — the soft combat zone of culture wars. Culture wars do not take place except in the field of machination. The simulation of war is more real than the warfare itself. It is running into the closed circuitries of the hyperreal.

Meltdown is softwar (run: *softwar.exe*).

War in cyberspace is continuous with its simulation: military intelligence fighting future wars which are entirely real, even when they are never implemented outside computer systems. Locking onto the real enemy crosses smoothly into virtual kill, a simulation meticulously adapted to market predators hunting for consumer cash and audience ratings amongst the phosphorescent relics of the videodrome. [...] The fusion of the military and the entertainment industry consummates a long engagement: convergent TV, telecoms, and computers sliding mass software consumption into neojungle and total war. The way games work begins to matter completely.[7]

Nick Land's *Meltdown* is nothing less than a cheat code to the so-called future of warfare. Reformat it into the present. Upload it into the softwar. Find new programming languages. Rewrite *Meltdown*: 'The story goes like this: [capitalism is captured by techno-apocalyptical imaginary…].'[8]

The cheat code is how to skip the level and win the war game. To cheat is not against the machine but from within the logic and even the ethics of the simulation: anyway, the code-cheaters play the game. The cheat code is either running or run into the techno-logic of the machine: it is either

written by the software engineer or overwritten by the softwar theorist. The cheat code: Shift + CTRL.

To run the cheat code, read the instruction manual (in order to write it again). *The Art of Softwar*: '[t]o subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.'[9] 'Thus, what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy'[10] with its own strategy.

Hardwar, on the other hand, is the impossibility of war as the war for the subject. The impossibility of the subject in the most extreme sense of the term: murder and suicide. The end of softwar is not to win the hardwar because to win is also to lose all. Instead: to start all over again, to start all over *from zeros*.

For the war of the so-called future, study how the simulation works. Go (hard) for the hyperreal.

References

Han, Byung-Chul. ‘The Tiredness Virus’, *The Nation*, 12 April 2021, https://www.thenation.com/article/society/pandemic-burnout-society/.

Land, Nick. ‘Meltdown’, in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1994), 441–460.

Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Tiqqun. *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, trans. Robert Hurley, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2020 (2001).

Tzu, Sun. *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

Žižek, Slavoj. *Living in the End Times*, Brooklyn: Verso, 2010.

---

1 Nick Land, ‘Meltdown’, in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena* (pp. 441–460). Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1994), p. 447.

2 Byung-Chul Han, ‘The Tiredness Virus’, *The Nation*, 12 April 2021, https://www.thenation.com/article/society/pandemic-burnout-society/.

3 Nick Land, ‘Meltdown’, p. 442.

4 Nick Land, ‘Meltdown’, p. 452.

5 Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, Brooklyn: Verso, 2010.

6 Compare with Tiqqun, *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, trans. Robert Hurley, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2020 (2001).

7 Nick Land, ‘Meltdown’, p. 454.

8 Nick Land, ‘Meltdown’, p. 441 (rewritten).

9 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (trans. Samuel B. Griffith). New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 77.

10 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, p. 77.

5 VIOLENCE AGAINST THE IMAGINARY

The image cannot present itself without a certain force, without a certain amount of violence. The image must always remove, put aside, place another image behind itself, to come to light.

The image of the Sun is, in this regard, the cruelest one since it always presents itself only by obliterating all other images, even itself. It is only after a certain time, according to the Platonic allegory of the *Republic*, that the image of the Sun and its daylight may be in plain view.

Today, there is no more time left for the image to come into sight. In the words of Jean Baudrillard, an image is not even allowed the short time to become an image. There are no signs, but only the buoyancy of the economy; there is no exchange, but rather immediate sharing. Auto-play and infinite scroll are the technologies of this virulence: the violence of the image that disappears in the flux of images, in the turbo-reproduction of more and more signs.

Turbo-Violence

The futurist violence of speed, the hyper-futurism of competition, the virulency of the cyber-economy.

Today violence is not, strictly speaking, in the image but in the buffer *between* one image and another. This hyper-capitalistic form of violence is not only the violence of information but the virality of advertisings, of fast fashion, of digital influence, the virulence of pop culture and its hyper-competitive and quick-changing *hits*… In each instance, each example, there is no image: only the speed of capitalism and its reproduction.

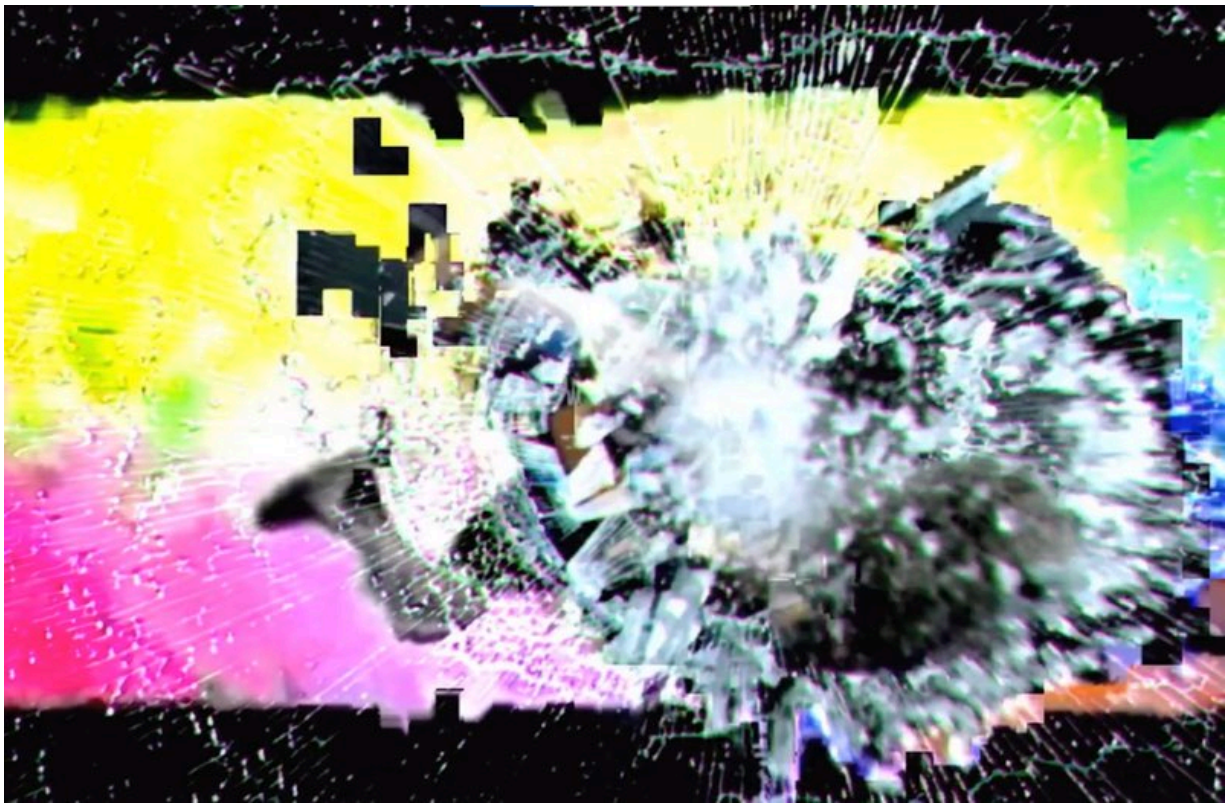
It is not possible to speak about an image, as if in the singular form. Minute after minute, it is more and more difficult to slow down, to pause, to go back to the ideality of the still image — perhaps to what Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* refers to as 'Photograph' with a capital *P*. *The capital of the image* is already moving, as if in an infinite semiosis. Then, images cannot signify the end because images do not finish and never stop finishing.

The glitch of the medium, too, is only another image, a twitch of the eye. The noise of the glitch is already decoded and re-encoded fast and smoothly: the violence between images is restored. To paraphrase Byung-Chul Han, *it is almost impossible to shut the eyes anymore*; it is almost not even possible to blink.

The image makes violence to itself. As Jean Baudrillard remarks in *The Violence of Images, Violence against Images,* the image is the medium of violence whose message is and can only be more violence.

If the image cracks, like in Kanye West's *Welcome to Heartbreak* (2:11), there is another picture already available (2:14). There is almost no more time for the image and its imaginary: everything changes but there is no

becoming. This is why there is perhaps no image in *Welcome to Heartbreak*, only the violence to images, the never-ending destruction and reproduction of more images (‘I’ve seen it / I’ve seen it before / I’ve seen it / I’ve seen it before / I’ve seen it / I’ve seen it before…’).[1]



The image ends and images do not finish the reproduction of their end (that is, capital): only this time *faster*, more *violently*. The *hot glitches* of A$AP Mob’s Yamborghini High, for example, where the images morph into one another, the pixels bleed in an endless flow of signs and semiocapital. Violence reproduces itself at the turbo-speed of the machine: ‘catch a nigga flyin’ by in a Lambo.’[2]

Variation after variation, the reproduction of the images is smoother and cleaner. There is no roughness in the virality of semiocapitalism. Just like in 100 Gecs' *Money Machine*, this new violence is like 'Big boys coming with the picture / Feel so clean like a money machine.'[3]

Cybertime and Cyberspace

Cybertime is the amount of time necessary for an image to become an image: the time necessary to think, feel, remember, imagine. But as soon as the reproduction of the images exceeds cybertime, as soon as images *overflow* memory and imagination, there is no more possibility for storage or re-routing, only for more reproduction.

Cybertime crashes. There is no more time in the images, only reproduction without production, because the new is often too slow, too large to upload. (Error: *new.exe* cannot be opened.) The newness of the glitch, too, is reproduced so fast that it is only another, oft-emulated, form of violence with neither time nor memory (for example, Reddit's Super Bowl commercial, where the company's orange and white logo pops up for an instant in the midst of a 6-seconds advertisement).

Cybertime is rebooted by cyberspace. The only reaction is one of virtual immediacy. 'Accept', 'deny', *Like*, swipe up, click… The bleep of the machine. 'Semiocapital puts neuro-psychic energies to work, submitting them to mechanistic speed, compelling cognitive activity to follow the rhythm of networked productivity. As a result,' Franco 'Bifo' Berardi writes in an article from 2010, 'the emotional sphere linked with cognition is stressed to its limit. Cyberspace overloads cybertime, because cyberspace is an unbounded sphere whose speed can accelerate without limits, while cybertime (the organic time of attention, memory, imagination) cannot be sped up beyond a certain point—or it cracks.'[4] As communication is reduced to information, feelings return as affects, only because the latter reproduce faster and more smoothly in cyberspace.

It is not then only the image that withdraws into the spectacle of capitalism; the spectator, too, disappears amid the overflow of the images.

There is not enough space available to upload a new imaginary.

Punctum and *Affectum*

Today, everything is to become visible, to be felt. Fewer and fewer images are seen, less and less is being felt. Trillions of images are stored and reproduced every day. But as the number of images is multiplied, imagination itself is removed. As Susan Sontag comments in her book about images and the representation of violence, “after [six] decades of big-budget Hollywood disaster films, ‘It felt like a movie’ seems to have displaced the way survivors of a catastrophe used to express the short-term unassimilability of what they had gone through: ‘It felt like a dream.’”[5] Violence is uploaded into cyberspace, although there is not enough space for fear or shock. Dreams are reset.

There is not even danger in the images, no poignancy. Images lack what Roland Barthes called the *punctum*, the singularity of the figure, the punch of emotion. There is no risk of damage in the images, except that of simulation. Images are too smooth. There is no aesthetic difference any longer, no punctuation, between the image and the viewer. Images are no different from the eye.

The medium of the images produces *affectum*. Affection is faster than feelings. Its reproduction is immediate (by contagion, or virality). There is no time left, then, to imagine, to feel, to think — almost not even the time to stare. ‘The affectum,’ writes Byung-Chul Han, ‘*shouts* and *excites*. All it produces are non-verbal excitement and stimuli, which cause an immediate liking.’[6]

To Glitch Violence

If the picture is violent in part because '*it fills the sight by force*,'[7] as Roland Barthes affirms in *Camera Lucida*, it also overwrites the imaginary with a similar force.

To revolt, to expose, to denounce the violence against the imaginary, it is therefore needed to imagine an alternative violence that does not just accelerate the image but its fierce medium, with the hope that it cracks, reboots, and glitches into a new imaginary.

The *glitch* represents a violence against the flow of information. For Rosa Menkman, glitches 'bring any medium into a critical state of hypertrophy, to (subsequently) criticize its inherent politics.'[8] Noise against more noise, turbo-violence against glitched violence.

Glitches will, nonetheless, always be reproduced and neutralized by the flow of more images. They are going to become fashionable, glamorous. The crackdown is *temporary*, after all. This is not just a limitation, though, but the cause of the glitch *moment(um)*: 'the potential any glitch has to modulate or productively damage the norms of techno-culture, in the moment at which this potential is first grasped.'[9]

The concept of moment(um) is twofold: first of all there is the moment, which is experienced as the uncanny, threatening loss of control, throwing the spectator into the void (of meaning). This moment then itself becomes a catalyst, with a certain momentum. Noise turns to glitch when it passes a momentary tipping point, at which it could tip away into a failure, or instead force new knowledge about the glitch's techné, and actual and presumed media flows, onto the viewer.[10]

The glitch moment(um) has the power to crack cyberspace. And perhaps, the *longer* its moment, the *greater* its momentum, its impetus.

On 11 September 2001, the CNN’s website went down for several hours: the catastrophe of cyberspace. The capitalist flow of images ends. At the same time, the imaginary of the end reproduces itself. The spectators dream about the end in a dream without images, similar to sleep.

The image returns to nothingness, nothingness to the image, so that it is not possible to differentiate between them anymore. Like a black sun, the glitch abolishes the difference between image and non-image, function, and error. Neither the indifference of the *affectum* nor the disturbance of the *punctum*.

The eyes are almost shut and nevertheless, *there* is an image — the hypernothingness of the black screen. The idleness of meaning.

Whatever is left there after the image has disappeared, whatever remains *after the end*, is only imaginary.

The Poetics of the Virus

What can we learn from a computer virus? A computer virus corrupts data. A computer virus costs capitalism. It degrades productivity within the machine. A computer virus is a threat to the function of the machine and its economy. […] Machines are expected to work well and work quickly. A computer virus triggers the machinic response of slowness in ways that are unpredictable to the user: endless buffering, crashing, damaging, deleting, reformatting. This slowness shifts time and space, altering a person's relationship to the machine.[11]

This slowness, this violence to the economy of the machine, further reboots the relationship with the imaginary. The virus, like us, dreams a dream without images that is almost sleep-like. It imagines a new template of the end, a series of zeros and ones converted into imaginary numbers. From the short circuit of reproduction to the imagination of open circuits.

References

100 Gecs. ‘Money Machine’, 2019, track 2, on *1000 Gecs* (Lafayette: Dog Show), 2019, LP.

A$AP Mob with Juicy J. ‘Yamborghini High’, 2016, track 1, on *Cozy Tapes: Vol. 1: Friends* (New York: ASAP Worldwide, New York: Polo Grounds, New York: RCA), 2016, CD.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard, London: Vintage Books, 2000 (1980).

Baudrillard, Jean. ‘The Violence of Images, Violence against Images’, trans. Paul Foss, *ArtUS* 23 (22 June 2008).

Berardi, Franco ‘Bifo’. ‘Cognitarian Subjectivation’, *e-flux* 20 (November 2010), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/20/67633/cognitarian-subjectivation/.

Han, Byung-Chul. *Saving Beauty*, trans. Daniel Steuer, Cambridge, Medford: Polity Press, 2018 (2015).

West, Kanye with Kid Cudi. ‘Welcome to Heartbreak’, 2008, track 2, on *808s & Heartbreak* (New York: Roc-A-Fella, New York: Def Jam), 2008, CD.

Menkman, Rosa. *The Glitch Moment(um)*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011.

Plato. ‘Republic’, trans. Paul Shorey, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds) *The Collected Dialogues of Plato. Including the Letters*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, 575–844.

reddit_irl. *Sorry We Crashed Your SuperbOwl Party*, Reddit post, 8 February 2021, 12:26 AM, https://www.reddit.com/r/blog/comments/leznyw/sorry_we_crashed_your_superbowl_party/.

Russell, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism*, London, Brooklyn: Verso, 2020.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London: Penguin, 2003.

---

1 Kanye West with Kid Cudi, ‘Welcome to Heartbreak’, 2008, track 2, on *808s & Heartbreak* (New York: Roc-A-Fella, New York: Def Jam), 2008, CD.

2 A$AP Mob with Juicy J, ‘Yamborghini High’, 2016, track 1, on *Cozy Tapes: Vol. 1: Friends* (New York: ASAP Worldwide, New York: Polo Grounds, New York: RCA), 2016, 12 files.

3 100 Gecs, ‘Money Machine’, 2019, track 2, on *1000 Gecs* (Lafayette: Dog Show), 2019, LP.

4 Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, ‘Cognitarian Subjectivation’, *e-flux* 20 (November 2010), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/20/67633/cognitarian-subjectivation/.

5 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London: Penguin, 2003, p. 19.

6 Byung-Chul Han, *Saving Beauty*, trans. Daniel Steuer, Cambridge, Medford: Polity Press, 2018 (2015), p. 39.

7 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard, London: Vintage Books, 2000 (1980), p. 91.

8 Rosa Menkman, *The Glitch Moment(um)*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011, p. 11.

9 Rosa Menkman, *The Glitch Moment(um)*, p. 8.

10 Rosa Menkman, *The Glitch Moment(um)*, p. 31.

11 Legacy Russell, *Glitch Feminism*, London, Brooklyn: Verso, 2020, p. 111.

6 OVERDRIVE AND MEANING

LES RALLIZES DÉNUDÉS

4chSYNTHESIZER DRUMS SCHEMATIC CIRCUIT DIAGRAM
（シンセ・ドラム部は４chのうち１ch分のみを示しています。ミキサー部は４ch分を示しています）
324
15158
3900
25C372
25A495
YELLOW
RATE
MUTE
Lch OUT
Rch OUT
50KA
25K30A
MYSTIC
MYSTIC

Drone and Apocalypse is a collection of Cynthia Wey's writings about music and the end of times in the form of an exhibition catalog from the year 2213. At the beginning of the XXI century, Cynthia Wey is a failed artist who waits for the end of the world as she listens to the music of William Basinski, Boards of Canada, Celer, Tim Hecker, and Éliane Radigue. Further, the last chapter of the book introduces the music of Les Rallizes Dénudés, the sound of the end that is overloaded with heavy distortion and blackened by Takashi Mizutani's dark poetry. 'Deeper than the night, darker than darkness. / There was blood and madness in the place where you awoke. / Under the beaming sky, you unfold your black wings, / Just as you wanted. After the black sunrise, / You'll meet them whenever you cross through the flames of ice.'[1]

But the aesthetics of the apocalypse is not only in the lyrics but within the high voltage of the amplifier itself, in that mayhem of overdrive and long reverberation that is the sound signature of Les Rallizes Dénudés. There, in the pandemonium of music, the apocalypse is both real and imaginary. 'Words fall away as does everything else,'[2] so writes Cynthia Wey in the first essay of the exhibition catalog. There is only noise and, then, nothing more; and again, more nothingness and hellish visions. 'The whispering angel will tell you / That you have to abandon everything. / The night, in all its radiance, / Sends it straight to your core. / Deeper than the night, darker than darkness. / You'll continue to fight. Death and madness.'[3]

LRD

Distortion, according to Claude Shannon's definition, is noise with a function. If there is an inverse to this function, the distortion will be corrected.[4]

On the other hand, Les Rallizes Dénudés (henceforth, LRD) is revolutionary noise, entropic fuzz, and political overdrive from Japan. The music of LRD is too loud and often too anarchic. The fuzz of the guitar of Takashi Mizutani is the destruction of sound, the reverb of nothingness.

But this mayhem of sound is not, as such, ever recorded. It is *only stolen*.

LRD never released a studio album. Why? Listen to any song from the bootleg recordings (for example, *Heavier Than a Death in the Family* from 2002) and compare it with the closest thing to a studio album that the psych-rock band of Takashi Mizutani produced in thirty years (*'67-'69 Studio et Live* from 1991): the explosion of a volcanic eruption against the fizzing sound of hot and dark red lava.

The first rule of LRD is: never record anything in a studio.[5] In fact, the recordings from 1991 are another sound for the engineer, another sign for the industry. Less meaning, more and more reproduction of the same. On the contrary, the bootleg recordings, which today represent most part of the discography of the Japanese band, are not so much about the quantity and quality of reproduction, but something else altogether. To put it into Claude Shannon's terms, the bootleg recordings of LRD are the sign of noise *without* an inverse function. Much more than the channel with some noise and its signal; more than another decoded sign and its economy. It is the impossibility to reproduce what is never there in the first place: sound

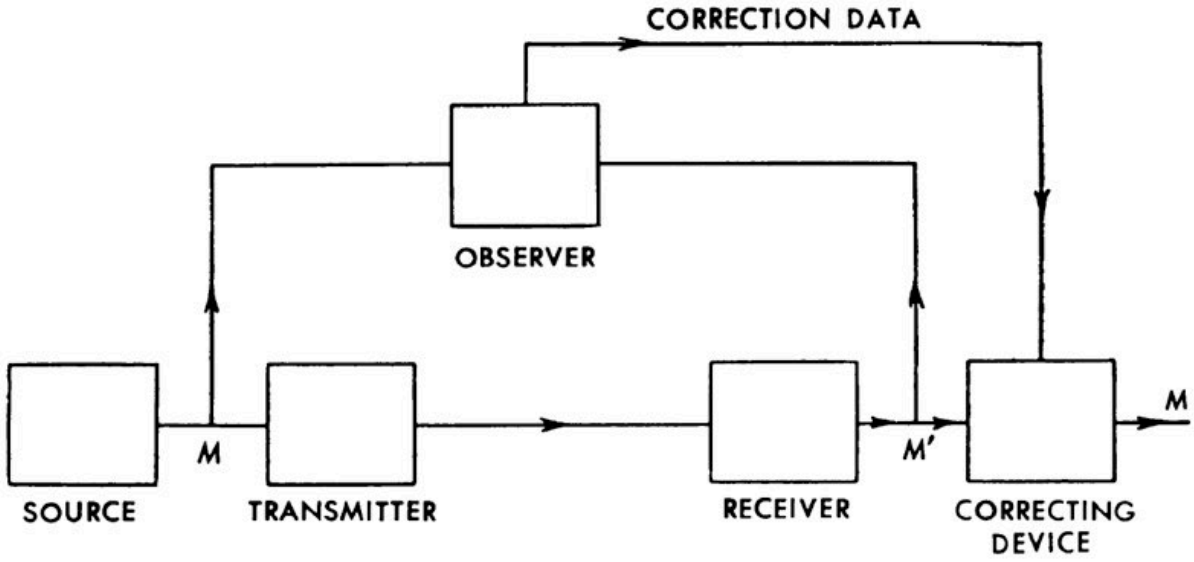
without noise, meaning in the form of information. This is not just nothingness but hypernothingness.

Words, just like meaning, fall away. The feedback of Takashi Mizutani's guitar is, in this regard, more than representation and signification. It is all that which it already wipes away, all that which is destroyed by the noise: all that is now just imaginary.

The Fascist Regime of Sound Engineering

In *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, Claude Shannon does not define distortion and channels with noise for the sake of it. He also suggests an approach to a system of correction, the disciplinary regime of information itself.

With reference to the diagram below, he theorizes “a communication system and an observer (or auxiliary device) who can see both what is sent and what is recovered (with errors due to noise). This observer notes the errors in the recovered message and transmits data to the receiving point over a ‘correction channel’ to enable the receiver to correct the errors.”[6]



The auxiliary device (or, to use a more Foucauldian term, the auxiliary *apparatus*) is just machinery. It may, however, be as well another subject: the sound engineer, who takes note of the transmitted and received signals and furthermore corrects the latter through the former, or the producer, who

takes note of the intended and perceived meaning and works through and against them.

The auxiliary device is a noise reducer. It is, also, the marketing strategy.

Let us quote, in this regard, from the independent documentary directed by Ian Svenonious, *What is a Group?* (also *the First Sci-Fi Documentary Rock 'n' Roll Exploitation Film*):

What is the engineer? The engineer is typically employed by the recording studio. He or she is a wage earner who performs skilled labour and whose job it is to record the sounds produced by the group using the various recording devices that you see in the studio. The console you see I'm working on is called *a mixing board*: each lever controls the volume from one of the particular microphones being used to record the group. This isolation technique serves to control the relative volume of each recorded sound. […] The engineer stands between what the group imagines and what the group actually creates.[7]

The producer, just like the sound engineer, reproduces information against the nothingness of the imaginary, against the aesthetics of the apocalypse as such.

No revelation. Noise is just more sound. Meaning is just information.

It is not at all surprising, then, to discover Takashi Mizutani's aversion to this disciplinary and fascistic technology of music recording. The revolution will not be sound-engineered.

For good or for worse, however, the revolution of LRD was televised when, on March 31, 1970, the bassist of the band, Moriaki Wakabayashi, hijacked a Boeing 727 with samurai swords and explosive devices. As a result of this, LRD was rejected from the Japanese underground rock scene. LRD disbanded.

The Apocalypse Will Not Take Place

Cynthia Wey (who is none other than the alter ego of Joanna Demers) knows that the apocalypse *will not take place.* Two hundred years before Cynthia Wey's art exhibition, in the year 2013, Joanna Demers writes: 'There is no apocalypse, because apocalypse has always been, and will always be with us.'[8]

It is, maybe, also because of this that Cynthia Wey never attempts to describe the end as such. All that which she writes about is less speculative and much more theoretical. As she further writes, with reference to G. W. F. Hegel's *Science of Logic*, 'the end is the moment when words fail, when everything fails, when limits are reached, when the infinite is revealed as real and the finite as ideal.'[9]

Likewise, the sound of LRD is not the representation of the end but the return to presence of the end in the form of noise. It is the relationship with that nothingness that is more than creation and destruction; it is reproduced as a series of zeros by the machinery, but it is so much more.

The machine does not know anything about the time of the end. It ignores it because the latter does not, in fact, exist, according to the proper sense of the term. It is imaginary. Less than a dream and more like never-ending sleep. It is all but futile to translate the latter into the former. Zero, which is infinite, is forever absent from the equation.

References

Cope, Julian. *Japrocksampler: How the Post-War Japanese Blew Their Minds on Rock 'n' Roll*, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Demers, Joanna. 'Ambient Drone and Apocalypse', *Current Musicology* 95 (Spring, 2013): 103–112.

—. *Drone and Apocalypse: An Exhibit Catalog for the End of the World*, London: Zer0 Books, 2015.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Science of Logic*, London: Routledge, 2010 (1812).

Hess, Daniel. 'Les Rallizes Dénudés: The Psychedelic Music Behind the Mayhem', *Perfect Sound Forever*, August 2021, https://www.furious.com/perfect/lesrallizesdenudes2.html.

Les Rallizes Dénudés. *'67-'69 Studio et Live* (n.p.: Rivista Inc.), 1991, CD.

—. *Heavier Than a Death in the Family* (not on label), 2002, CD.

—. 'Strung Out Deeper Than the Night', 1977, track 1, on *Heavier Than a Death in the Family* (not on label), 2002, CD.

Shannon, Claude E. 'The Mathematical Theory of Communication', in Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998 (1949), 29–108.

What is a Group? (dir. Ian Svenonius, 2016). Strawberry City, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Izlj7-T5S4&t=281s.

---

1 The lyrics of *Deeper Than The Night*, usually referred to on the internet with the alternative title *Strung Out Deeper Than The Night*, were translated into English by Rate Your Music user *slioganach*, as cited in Daniel Hess, 'Les Rallizes Dénudés: The Psychedelic Music Behind the Mayhem', *Perfect Sound Forever* (August 2021), https://www.furious.com/perfect/lesrallizesdenudes2.html.

2 Joanna Demers, *Drone and Apocalypse: An Exhibit Catalog for the End of the World*, London: Zer0 Books, 2015, p. 25.

3 Les Rallizes Dénudés, ‘Strung Out Deeper Than the Night’, 1977, track 1, on *Heavier Than a Death in the Family* (not on label), 2002, CD.

4 At the beginning of the discussion of noise in information theory, Claude Shannon defines *distortion* as an example in ‘the case where the signal is perturbed by noise during transmission or at one or the other of the terminals. This means that the received signal is not necessarily the same as that sent out by the transmitter. […] If a particular transmitted signal always produces the same received signal, i.e., the received signal is a definite function of the transmitted signal, then the effect may be called distortion. If this function has an inverse — no two transmitted signals producing the same received signal — distortion may be corrected, at least in principle, by merely performing the inverse functional operation on the received signal’ (Claude E. Shannon, ‘The Mathematical Theory of Communication’, in Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998 (1949), 29–108, p. 65).

5 While the second rule is: ‘Play only with musicians for whom even the slightest deviation from the riff will most certainly be calamitous.’ The third rule is: ‘Never release records (never ever).’ The fourth and last rule is: ‘Persist for three decades until the outside world catches on’ (Julian Cope, *Japrocksampler: How the Post-War Japanese Blew Their Minds on Rock ‘n’ Roll*, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2007, p. 165).

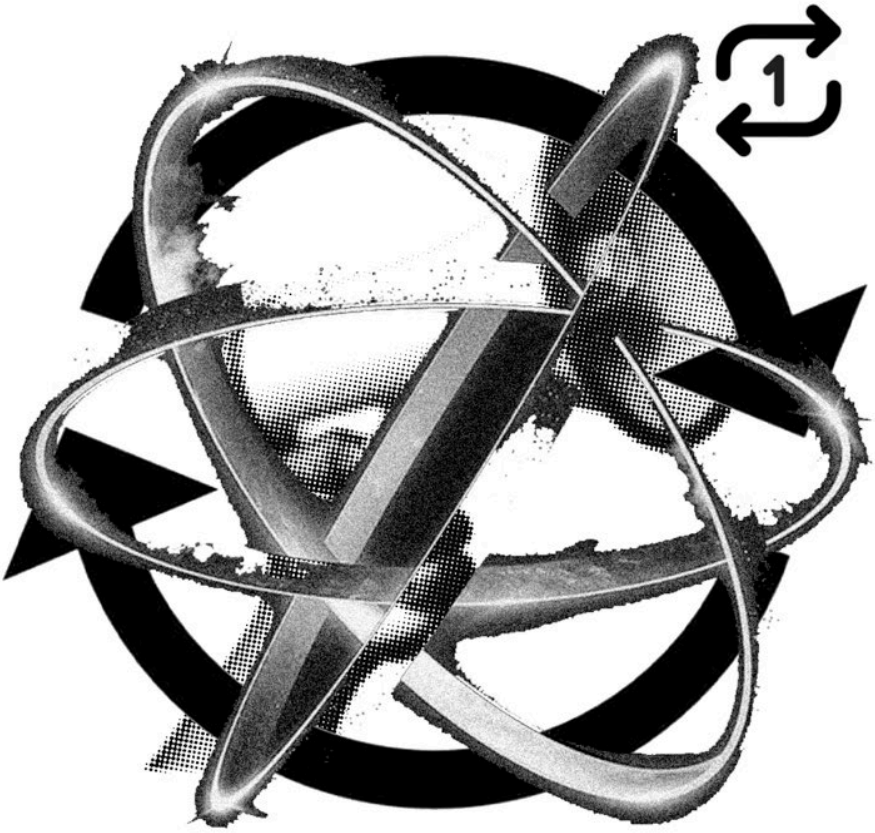
6 Claude E. Shannon, ‘The Mathematical Theory of Communication’, p. 68.

7 *What is a Group?* (dir. Ian Svenonius, 2016), Strawberry City, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Izlj7-T5S4&t=281s.

8 Joanna Demers, ‘Ambient Drone and Apocalypse’, *Current Musicology* 95 (Spring, 2013): 108.

9 Joanna Demers, *Drone and Apocalypse*, p. 25.

7 DOOM LOOP FOREVER


1

The same song plays again in a loop. The direction of time is irreversible: the information is degraded, the magnetic tape disintegrates. The same song plays again, but this time through a digital medium. The direction of time is reversible: zeros and ones reproduce the same without any difference as such. The technological shift from analog media to digital ones is a change from reversible to irreversible time and, to put it into more psychoanalytical terms, against death.

Capitalism and the Death Drive

Julian Casablancas from The Strokes sings: ‘The end has no end, the end has no end... / The end has no end, the end has no end... ’[1] It is impossible to not press *play* and listen to the song again and again and, as a result, replay its political economy. Time is reversed and replayed another time. The sign of the end does not mean anything anymore. The return of the same is just another form of accumulation. It is the drive towards a certain form of productive time: time to consume again. In the song by The Strokes, time takes the same form as any other commodity, then its reproduction is nothing less than a respite from time and death as such.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud explained the compulsion to repetition in children by taking into account the wish to return to an earlier stage of things. However, it may as well be the reverse: an attempt to suppress the dangers of the end. As Byung-Chul Han states in *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, ‘Capital is accumulation in order to escape death. Capital may also be seen as frozen time; infinite amounts of capital create the illusion of an infinite amount of time.’[2]

To listen to the same song on repeat — and mass-produced music like the *indie* rock of The Strokes, in particular — is not a form of production but an escapism from production and for production’s sake.[3] The song plays again and leisure time is more and more just like working time. Indeed the time of capital is never actually frozen time but time without itself, time without death. The emphasis, therefore, is not on accumulation, as Byung-Chul Han has it, but on consumption. Time to consume more and, also, be forever consumed by.

The Necropolitics of the Loop

In *The Illusion of the End*, Jean Baudrillard writes that the end is always lived after its own ending. Today, there is no more time after the end: no more time to end. As soon as the end reproduces itself, it reproduces infinitely in a loop. *Play this again?* Nothing less and nothing more than a perverted proposition of immortality. In fact, there is almost no longer life because there is no longer death.

In *Open Your Eyes*, as well as in the infamous remake with Tom Cruise, *Vanilla Sky*, there is no more death, as the life of the main character's lover (Penélope Cruz, in both movies) is reproduced by means of dream simulation in exchange for money. The main character lives in a fantasy where death is negated by capital and time is abolished by technology (by the private company *Life Extension*).

There is no more ending because there is no more time to end. The only thing that is certain is not anymore death but capital.

Save and Destroy

The Disintegration Loops is an album series about the end and the paradox of its reproduction. Recorded by William Basinski, the loops made of found music and shortwave radio were converted from an analog source to a digital machine. But the transference to the digital medium is equal to the disintegration of the loops. In fact, small particles of iron oxide from the plastic backing of the record turned into dust and accidentally dropped into the tracks as the recording passed over the tape head.

Where there is iron dust, the reproduction of the digital medium is now quiet.

Sound-zero. The *nothingness* of the plastic reel.

Twenty minutes into the first of the four loops, the sound disintegrates and silence is reproduced into it. After all this, the sound of the recording is infinitely approximating zero.

Nothingness is put back into being and the commodity that is time. The replay of the same is, also, the play of the *same* nothingness.

The end is reproduced again and again: without end. It is just another kind of *death drive*.

It was the morning of the September 11, 2001 when the transference and relative oxide deterioration of *The Disintegration Loops* finished. Since 2012, an excerpt from the album series and a video installation of Brooklyn's skyline made by William Basinski on the day of the September attacks is reproduced in a loop at Ground Zero (in New York's National Memorial Museum). The binary code takes the place of the Twin Towers.

For Mark Fisher, William Basinski's album series 'is a parable (almost too perfect) for the switch from the fragility of analog to the infinite replicability of digital.'[4] The recording, in fact, is not destroyed.

The illusion of the end is reproduced. The end returns to nothingness and it does not end returning: zeros after zeros after zeros. But then, there is nothing at all. Zeros and ones are not different from zero as such anymore. Once again, this is nothing more and nothing less than hypernothingness: a kind of nothingness that is more than creation and destruction, more than reality and its reproduction. It is the symbolic relationship with the end as such, ‘after it has actually happened, in its symbolic elaboration,’[5] as Jean Baudrillard writes in *The Illusion of the End*. It is whatever is after the economy of the end.

Reproduction is equal to zero. Zero is reproduced with no end; no more and again.

On 23 August, 2017 an even longer version of first album by William Basinski was uploaded on YouTube by an independent channel with only a few thousand subscribers. From zero to even less. The length of the record is time-stretched from one to eight hours. The eon takes the place of recording time.

References

Basinsky, William. *The Disintegration Loops* (New York: 2062), 2002, CD.

—. *The Disintegration Loops II* (New York: 2062), 2003, CD.

—. *The Disintegration Loops III* (New York: 2062), 2003, CD.

—. *The Disintegration Loops IV* (New York: 2062), 2003, CD.

Baudrillard, Jean. *The Illusion of the End*, trans. Chris Turner, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994 (1992).

Fisher, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, London: Zer0 Books, 2014.

Freud, Sigmund. 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', trans. James Strachey, in *The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 11: On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, London: Pelican, 1987 (1920), 269–338.

Han, Byung-Chul. *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, trans. Daniel Steuer, Cambridge, Medford: Polity, 2021 (2019).

Open Your Eyes (dir. Alejandro Amenábar, 1997). Canal+ España, Las Producciones del Escorpión, Les Films Alain Sarde Lucky Red, Sociedad General de Televisión.

Slow Motion TV. 'William Basinski — Disintegration Loop 1.1 (Time-Stretched Version) 8h 27m 15s', YouTube video, 23 August 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdXjVM1aMgA.

Svenonius, Ian. 'Time is Money', in G. Gill (ed) *The Psychic Soviet: And Other Works*, Chicago: Drag City, 2020 (2006), 135–146.

The Strokes. 'The End Has No End', 2003, track 10, on *Room on Fire* (New York: RCA), 2003, CD.

Vanilla Sky (dir. Cameron Crowe, 2001). Cruise/Wagner Productions, Vinyl Films, Summit Entertainment Sogecine.

1 The Strokes, ‘The End Has No End’, 2003, track 10, on *Room on Fire* (New York: RCA), 2003, CD.

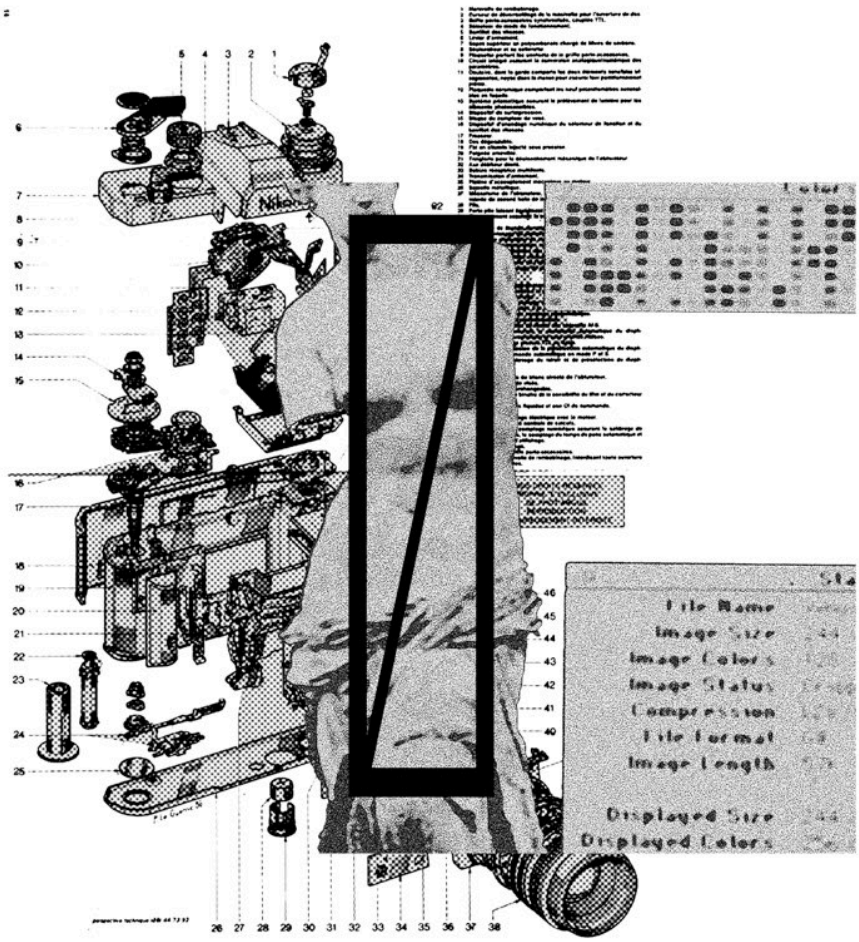
2 Byung-Chul Han, *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, trans. Daniel Steuer, Cambridge, Medford: Polity, 2021 (2019), p. 7.

3 “If music can no longer be relied on to induce a whirling-dervish frenzy, it can provide a blanket of cover from the responsibilities of the minute and the hour, usually so wrought with fear of death and sexual anxiety. Music has become a sanctuary essentially, a church where one finds respite from time. Music’s function is now in fact merely one of expanding time for the listener against its unceasing contraction at the hands of the industrial sector with all of its ‘time-saving’ inventions and products. […] Music as a tool for shopping is one of those particularly sinister reflexive ironies” (Ian Svenonius, ‘Time is Money’, in G. Gill (ed) *The Psychic Soviet: And Other Works*, Chicago: Drag City, 2020 (2006), 135–146, pp. 140–141).

4 Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. London: Zer0 Books, 2014, p. 144.

5 Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. Chris Turner, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994 (1992), p. 90.

8 TECHNOLOGY DEGREE ZERO


File Name
Image Size
Image Colors
Image Status
Compression
File Format
Image Length
Displayed Size
Displayed Colors

There is no negation in immediacy. The code of the machine spurns negativity. *Negation produces acid nothingness into the machine*. Only language switches off representation from reference, the image of the machine from imagination as such. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi writes along the lines of Paolo Virno's *An Essay on Negation*: 'Only language establishes the possibility of negating what our senses are experiencing. Negation is like a switch that breaks the natural link between sensorial experience and conscious elaboration. Immediate experience knows a state of being, but only language can deny the state of being that experience acknowledges. In this sense we can say that negation is the beginning of any mediation.'[1] Negation perverts and destroys the reproduction of the machine, even the real itself.

However, it is in a second stage, when negativity is abstracted into a logical function, that language reproduces the order of the machine. Language itself is re-formatted into a system of commands: 'accept', 'cancel', *Like*, *Dislike*, 'share', 'OK'... *Press 0 to continue*. Then, there is no more reference to the real, no more imaginary other than the one the code of the machine already reproduces.

Today, the mediation of language is more and more often removed by the immediacy of images. Across two decades, social media platforms seem to have shifted from word-centered models of communication (from MSN Messenger to Twitter) to more mixed or image-based forms of communication (from Facebook and Instagram to, even more recently, Snapchat and TikTok). This is not at all surprising: images are, in fact, shared and consumed at a much faster rate than language.

As a result, today it is increasingly difficult to negate, to deny, to reject. The negative function of the *Dislike* is repressed in favor of more reproduction (on YouTube, for example). There is no off-switch built into the machine. Paradoxically, just when everything is to be visible, this is also when everything withdraws into a sort of *transparency*. The screen

‘screens’ itself behind the image, as if it were to disappear in the illusion of immateriality and immediacy — to rephrase Giorgio Agamben. The medium is abstracted into the idealism of reproduction. Technocapitalism is virtually everywhere, so that it recedes into a kind of transparency. Negation itself, however, will always be possible only through reference to the medium.

Today, social media communication is more and more a particular form of hyperconnection, ‘and... and... and...’, without negation or electric faults. To agree to the terms and conditions is restricted to *not disagreeing* with them. All choices are automatically turned on. Again and again, language is rewired into the machinery. If you liked this… *you will love that*.

There is almost no possibility to say *no*: the mother tongue of the subject is abused by the reproduction of more and more signs. Just another form of ‘technofuck buzz from the desiring-machines’ (to misquote from Nick Land’s *Machinic Desire*).[2] Furthermore, as communication is more and more graphic, it is pseudo-pornographic too: everything is displayed, nothing is denied. Everything is already plugged in only for the purpose of softcore reproduction.

Denial-of-Service Attack

Machines do not know anything about the end. For the system of the machine, there is nothing more than the present state. A recent article published by the *Institute of Network Cultures* reads: ‘Computers cannot ask themselves what would possibly go wrong if that code is executed. Computer logic realizes its own state only when it has reached the state.’[3] The machine does not know the end-time. The machine reproduces frenetically.

```
reproduce() {
    reproduce | reproduce &
    }; reproduce
```

The *reproduce()* function is executed recursively. Above is an example of *wabbit*. A wabbit reproduces itself endlessly until the machine is saturated with its own softcore ideology. (*More… and more… and more…*). It overloads and eventually crashes the executing operating system. It is the same technofuck buzz of the machine. It is the end that the machine itself already encodes. From hardcore reproduction to hard reset. From the syntax of computer languages to the poetic language of the virus.

:(){ :|:& };: is like poetry (created by the Italian hacking artist Jaromil in 2002) in the form of hacking. To hack further a line by Keston Sutherland,[4] it would read like: *REPRODUCE MORE, BE LESS*. A wabbit reproduces fast and fucks even faster the techno-logic of the system. But it is just now, after the machine is all fucked up, that its logic is to be written from zero.

Byung-Chul Han writes in *The Burnout Society*: ‘Impotence is merely the opposite of positive potency. It is positive itself insofar as it connects with something, which it cannot do.’ However: ‘Negative potency reaches beyond such positivity.’[5] Negative potentiality and impotentiality are rather different. Nonetheless, the philosopher fails to see that the impotentiality of the machine is already the negative potency of the subject and the positive potency of another system.

Zero, of course, does not exist. The zero-state of negation is, as Julia Kristeva already noted, something which the subject passes through. Zero is reset to one and, later, to two. A new machine language is produced like so into the system. The imaginary runs a copy of itself into the machine; it reproduces itself through the logic of the techné that it almost destroyed.

Disclaimer

Warning: you may not reproduce any of the above through any machine. The question is not about the destruction of technology but, rather, the degree to which technology is functional to the reproduction of an imaginary.

No machines were harmed in the making of this book.

References

Agamben, Giorgio. *The Fire and the Tale*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa, Stanford: Stanford University Press. 2014.

Berardi, Franco ‘Bifo’. *And: Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication*, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, 2014.

Han, Byung-Chul. *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015 (2010).

Knabb, Ken. *Situationist International Anthology (Revised and Expanded Edition)*, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006 (1981).

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, Leon S. Roudiez, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989 (1977).

Land, Nick. ‘Machinic Desire’, in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1993), 319–344.

P0es1s. *:(){ :|:& };: Ascii Forkbomb*, 2002, http://www.p0es1s.net/en/projects/jaromil.html.

Sutherland, Keston. *The Odes to TL61P*, London: Enitharmon Editions, 2013.

‘The Void’, *Fandom*, 2017, https://redditplace.fandom.com/wiki/The_Void, accessed 18 March 2023.

Virno, Paolo. *An Essay on Negation: For a Linguistic Anthropology*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2018 (2013).

Westphal, Yannick. ‘Hacking Art’, *INC Longform*, 9 February 2022, https://networkcultures.org/longform/2022/02/09/hacking-art/.

---

1 Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the End*, p. 14.

2 Nick Land, ‘Machinic Desire’, in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1993), 319–344, p. 344.

3 Yannick Westphal. ‘Hacking Art’, *INC Longform* (9 February 2022), https://networkcultures.org/longform/2022/02/09/hacking-art/.

4 ‘Happily eat the boiled hyenas but omit to suck dry their dark alarming skulls. Capitalism, the system for profit we all die under, is the infinite multiplication of values; the last resistance is sterility, but not the least. Queering war. […] MAKES LESS, BE MORE’ (Keston Sutherland, *The Odes to TL61P*, London: Enitharmon Editions, 2013, p. 29). A graffito from May 1968: ‘The more you consume, the less you live’ (Ken Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology (Revised and Expanded Edition)*, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006 (1981), p. 455). The slogan of The Void community on Reddit: ‘*CONSUME EVERYTHING*, *CREATE NOTHING*’ (Fandom contributors, ‘The Void’, *Fandom*, 2017, https://redditplace.fandom.com/wiki/The_Void, accessed 18 March 2023).

5 Byung-Chul Han, *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015 (2010), p. 24.

9 TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE...

永眠

To sleep is no action but, rather, the negativity of all action, the return to a passive state.

Sleep does not produce anything. By nature, sleep is unproductive. For this reason, techno-gurus warn against the dangers of the economy of Hypnos, while sleep streamers make profits from live-streaming their time off in the dreamworld.

After all, the capital(ist) does not sleep.

Work does not end. Production is the rule. Boredom is outlawed. Like Byung-Chul Han already remarks in *The Burnout Society*, tiredness develops less and less into exhaustion. More and more, it is just another symptom of the psychopathology of capitalism.

If you are living in the age of capitalism, you must be *very* tired by now. In addition to fatigue, you may have noticed warning signs of depression, anxiety, paranoia, and an increase in aggression — all in all, symptoms of sleep deprivation. The society of tiredness is, also, the society of depression, anxiety, paranoia, rage, and narcolepsy.

The Second Sun

If the mass of Jupiter would have been greater than it currently is, the gas giant would have become the second star in the Solar system. What never happened on the astrophysical level, virtualized itself on the techno-physical level. The artificial light of the screens today functions like a second Sun.

As the Sun never sets over the empire, the day never ends. Thus, the second empire of the Sun does away with the distinction between light and darkness, day and night; the working day is endless; the spectacle is everywhere and everywhere is the spectacle. There is no new order of time but, instead, the scarcity of time itself.

'[**MARK FISHER**:] Imagine if you could invent something like that — where you'd just endlessly distract yourself; at any point in the world and at any time in the world you can be reached by the imperatives of capitalism… Imagine an object like that! What would it look like?

STUDENT #10: A phone?'[1]

After the imperialization of space and time, neo-liberal capitalism (or alt-fascism as McKenzie Wark dubs it) is the only form of imaginary. Dreaming is removed from sleep while it is more and more simulated and even commodified, as *the object of dream interpretation is no longer dreaming but advertising*.

The Potentiality of Sleeplessness

According to Aristotle, sleep is the potentiality of waking life. Sleep does not produce anything but is the potentiality of all production.

At the same time, the absence of sleep is the power of the productive system itself: waking up is, after all, the *end* of sleep.

If, for Aristotle, sleep is primary to wakefulness, then sleeplessness is also primary to capitalism. In 2017, the CEO of Netflix stated that ‘when you watch a show from Netflix and you get addicted to it, you stay up late at night. We’re competing with sleep.’[2] Just a little more spectacle, please.

What Guy Debord referred to as *the spectacle of modern passivity* now has replaced passivity as such. Not so much as the power of waking life, the spectacle is the power of sleeplessness. (Think of the Internet with the white lights of the empire of the Sun.) — A notification pops up on the black screen: ‘Are you still watching?’

Hypnos and Thanatos

Why do you wish to sleep? If, according to the theory of the psychoanalyst Sándor Ferenczi, sex represents, due to its associations with fluid exchanges and discharges, the wish to return to the origin of life, a kind of regression to the sea, then, sleep without dreams signifies a return to an even earlier stage of things: to the darkness of the underworld. In contrast with Eros, the principle of reproduction and organic life, Hypnos and his darker brother, Thanatos, represent the principle of the return to the lifeless and the inorganic.

To fall asleep is the return to zero. To fall asleep is to fear death, Jacques Derrida once admitted to his friend, Jacqueline Risset.[3] Deeper than the night: death and, perhaps, the taste of madness.

Without sleep, dream and wakefulness are alike to each other. Dreaming, the guardian of sleep,[4] does no longer have any particular purpose. Morpheus, the god of dreams, one of the thousand sons of Hypnos, is an orphan of the dark realm; now, the white light of the spectacle welcomes him as one of its phantoms. But the anxiety of sleep that Jacques Derrida acknowledged does not disappear, not at all: today, it enrages furiously.

To return to the degree zero of energy is impossible. Instead, it is more a matter of the return of the abyss into existence, returning Thanatos to Eros, Hypnos to his romantic son, Morpheus.

Dark-0

Sleep is its own interpretation. ‘I can only hope that the answers will come to me in my sleep. I hope that when the world comes to an end, I can breathe a sigh of relief, because there will be so much to look forward to.’ At the end of Richard Kelly’s *Donnie Darko*, the main character, Donald ‘Donnie’ Darko (Jake Gyllenhaal), returns to the past in order to die in an aircraft accident while asleep in his bedroom. The sweetest death: in the arms of Hypnos and Thanatos.

At the beginning of the movie, Donnie Darko averts the deadly accident thanks to a giant rabbit called Frank. Frank the Rabbit is a messenger sent to warn Donnie that the end of the world is near: ‘28 days, 6 hours, 42 minutes, 12 seconds. That is when the world will end.’ Time does not exist in sleep, and Donnie Darko cannot understand what Frank the Rabbit means. After all, this is just a dream of the end and Frank the Rabbit is the psychopomp. It is through sleep and the power of the imaginary that, also with the help of Grandma Death, Donnie will return back in time. In *Donnie Darko*, the end of the world is the return to the beginning.

When the airplane engine eventually ends up killing Donnie, there is no fear, no anxiety, no terrifying or abrupt cry of despair; he is fast asleep.

The world does not end: it already ended. Zero is returned into one. After the end, everything is the same because nothing has *ever* been different. Zero has always been imaginary. (0+1 is equal to 1.) Donnie Darko dies in a sleep without dreams — sleep does not bring anything to light but returns everything to the darkness. It is there that the future — that is already past the ending — always is.

At last, it is to the beginning, not to the end, that we return: again and anew. The potentiality of sleep returns as the negative potentiality of

dreaming, the impotentiality of sleep, and the sleep of potentialities from which a new form of power is all but impossible. Nothingness is returned into being.

References

Aristotle. *Parva Naturalia*, trans. David Ross, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.

Berardi, Franco ‘Bifo’. *And: Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication*, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, 2014.

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb, London: Rebel Press, 1992 (1967).

Donnie Darko (dir. Richard Kelly, 2001). Flower Films.

Fisher, Mark. ‘Lecture Three: From Class Consciousness to Group Consciousness’, in Matt Colquhoun (ed) *Postcapitalist Desire: The Final Lectures*, London: Repeater Books, 2021.

Ferenczi, Sándor. *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality*, trans. Henry Alden Bunker, London, New York: Routledge, 2018 (1924).

Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey, The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 4. London: Pelican, 1976 (1900).

Han, Byung-Chul. (2015). *The Burnout Society* (Trans. Erik Butler). Stanford: Stanford University Press. (Original work published 2010).

Hern, Alex. ‘Netflix’s Biggest Competitor? Sleep’, *The Guardian*, 18 April 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/apr/18/netflix-competitor-sleep-uber-facebook.

Risset, Jacqueline. *Sleep’s Powers*, trans. Jennifer Moxley, New York: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2008 (1997).

Wark, McKenzie. *Capital Is Dead: Is This Something Worse?* London, Brooklyn: Verso, 2019.

---

1 Mark Fisher, ‘Lecture Three: From Class Consciousness to Group Consciousness’, in Matt Colquhoun (ed) *Postcapitalist Desire: The Final Lectures*, London: Repeater Books, 2021, 112–146,

p. 134.

2 Alex Hern, ‘Netflix’s Biggest Competitor? Sleep’, *The Guardian* (18 April 2017), https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/apr/18/netflix-competitor-sleep-uber-facebook.

‘Semiocapitalism is infiltrating the nervous cells of the conscious organisms, inoculating in them a tanatho-political rationale, a morbid sentiment which permeates the collective Unconscious, culture and sensibility: an obvious effect of sleep deprivation, an obvious consequence of attention stress’ (Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the End*, p. 244).

3 ‘Entrusting yourself to sleep: a frightening act—J. D. telling me the other day that he almost never falls asleep without anxiously asking himself if he will wake up, if this inexplicable phenomenon will produce itself once more for him, or not.’ Jacqueline Risset, *Sleep’s Powers*, trans. Jennifer Moxley, New York: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2008 (1997), p. 90.

4 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey. The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 4. London: Pelican, 1976 (1900).

10 WELCOME TO THE VIRTUAL PLAZA

Like factories, shopping centers today exist only to efface their omnipresence. After ‘society as a whole takes the appearance of a factory,’[1] to quote from Jean Baudrillard’s *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, society itself now takes the form of a shopping arcade.

At the same time, we are more and more like Tiqqun’s Young-Girl who ‘is only good for consuming, pleasure or work, it doesn’t matter.’[2]

This is what happens when capitalism is the only form of imaginary able to reproduce itself; there are almost no more differences between the imagery of the machine and imagination. In fact, everything is reproduced already faster than it is imagined.

There is no more distinction between work and leisure: indeed, leisure is equal to work. ‘You go to the office and sit at a desk, but maybe it is a fake job. Your real job is shopping.’[3] Welcome to semiocapitalism. *What does not wither in an age of electronic reproduction is the urge to consume*.

Internet’s Arcades

In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin attempted to account for the economic and political life of XIX-century society through a study of the famous Paris shopping arcades: the glass-covered passages where the Parisian middle class used to stroll and buy luxury goods.

The internet is today’s shopping arcade,[4] and the virtual plaza, one of its deluxe sites.

The virtual plaza is the emporium of semiocapitalism, where the latter is reproduced through an aesthetics of palm trees, Japanese culture, and Neoclassical architecture. Not so long ago, the owners of the shopping arcades used to sell goods and services in exchange for money; now the artists and designers of the virtual plaza smuggle one semiotic good for another. ‘At the end of the world there will only be a liquid advertisement and gaseous desire. Sublimated from our bodies, our untethered senses will endlessly ride escalators through pristine artificial environments, […] consuming and consumed by a relentlessly rich economy of sensory information, valued by the pixel. The Virtual Plaza welcomes you, and you will welcome it too.’[5]

In the virtual plaza, everything is now valued by the pixel. The arcade is just a sign like any other: in this regard, the fetish of the empty shopping center is nothing except the fascination with the end of production as such. For if the empty factory is the end of production, what is the copy of its reproduction as an image? After the end of production, reproduction does not end. This is the irony of the empty shopping center. And irony, after all, just makes people consume more.

In the 1980s, the environmental music of Haruomi Hosono was designed for MUJI retail stores in Japan. Today, the virtual plaza is nothing

but the endless reproduction of its own aesthetics.

Reproduction itself is at once the medium and the message of the virtual plaza.

The Age of Electronic Reproduction

In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin famously argues that reproduction represents the elimination of the *aura* of the work of art, its unique presence in space and time.

More and more today, the image is already a copy: it reproduces itself faster than it presents itself as an object in its singularity. ‘The reproduced work of art is to an ever-increasing extent the reproduction of a work of art designed for reproducibility.’[6] As a result, the medium reproduces more and more of itself and its own image. There is almost nothing else besides the reiteration of such a spectacle.

In the age of electronic reproduction, it is furthermore the imaginary of the consumer that is reproduced. More and more we are just like Tiqqun’s Young-Girl, the avatar of the spectacle society that reproduces herself through the images of the spectacle. Both commodity and consumer, there is no aura around our own self-promotion and retail as an image. No identity except that of statistics; no tradition except that of mass consumption.

Welcome to the Virtual Dream Plaza

‘Through the eyes of the Young-Girl, the Spectacle is looking at you.’[7] ‘The Young-Girl does not speak,’ the collective Tiqqun writes. ‘On the contrary, she is spoken by the Spectacle.’[8]

The *Virtual Dream Plaza* is one of the products of the virtual plaza. It is a series of thirty-two hypnotic vaporwave jams by t e l e p a t h. Each jam includes an album cover art with a young girl (referred to as ‘dream girl’ on the internet), sometimes presented as part of an advertisement, at times as part of the background and the foreground.[9]

On the cover of three albums (‘I Need You’, ‘You and I Forever’, and ‘Dream Girl’), for example, the young girl is both in the background and foreground of a makeup advertisement. In the last release from the *Virtual Dream Plaza*’s box set (‘Beyond the Dream’, a bonus track), she is part of the compact cassette’s design itself. In all instances, she is both consuming and consumed at the same time.

Everything that is reproduced into an image is created and destroyed altogether; the alienation of reproduction. ‘The Young-Girl inhabits the Spectacle just like a woman in the primitive world, as an *object* of Advertising. But the Young-Girl is also the subject of Advertising, exchanging itself.’[10] The young girl is, moreover, the image against all that which is radically different from the reproduction of the spectacle — now more than ever, reproduction is the warfare of imagination — to the extent that she is set against the reproduction of the subject as such: the paroxysm of seduction. ‘Because the Young-Girl,’ as Tiqqun writes, ‘is the living presence of everything that, humanely, wants our death. She is not only the purest product of the Spectacle, she is the plastic proof of our love for it.’[11]

The exacerbation of the system of reproduction is possible only at the cost of the production of more destruction and nothingness: positive feedback. Vaporwave aesthetics is the production of the same, over and over again. This is a *negative*, rather than *positive*, feedback circuit. But an alternative, semio-accelerationist design of the virtual plaza is one where, instead, the representation of the same is already equal to the principle of

death itself. It is not just another product of capitalism but the critique of capitalism for what it always is: its own destruction and the reproduction of its inexorable end.

A Young-Girl’s Playlist of Vaporwave Music

Shut up, relax, and stream the dream. Enjoy the Young-Girl’s mixtape from the virtual plaza, where everything is valued by the pixel, and where even your soft enjoyment and ironic remarks are welcomed and priced.

1. Virtual Dream Plaza — 仮想夢プラザ (2015–present)
2. 「サンセット Ｎｅｔｗｏｒｋ❾❶」 — ＨＩＧＨ-ＦＡＳＨＩＯＮ「犯罪現場」 (2015)
3. Trademarks & Copyrights — Marble Girls (2016)
4. 猫シ Corp. — LUXURY GIRLS (2017)
5. SAYOHIMEBOU — 卡拉OK♫スターダスト東風 (2017)
6. Origami Girl — Tranquillity (2019)
7. luxury elite — blue eyeshadow (2021)
8. death’s dynamic shroud.wmv — Faith in Persona (2021)
9. Nova Dive — スロールック (2021)
10. *甘い夢のスケジュール — ロマンチックな至福* (2022)

References

Baudrillard, Jean. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Iain Hamilton Grant, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1993 (1976).

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999 (1982).

—. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood, London: Penguin, 2008 (1938).

Harper, Adam. 'Comment: Vaporwave and the Pop-Art of the Virtual Plaza', *Dummy*, 12 July 2012, https://dmy.co/news/adam-harper-vaporwave.

Hosono, Haruomi. *花に水* [*Watering a Flower*] (Tokyo: 冬樹社), 1984, cassette.

Living in an Unreal World: A Film by Adam Curtis (dir. Adam Curtis, 2016). Vice Media, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NzzSqHK-50.

Virtual Dream Plaza. 仮想夢プラザ [Virtual Dream Plaza] (n.p.: Ephemera Archives), 2017, 31 cassettes

Tiqqun. *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, trans. Ariana Reines, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012 (1999).

Watson, Mike. *The Memeing of Mark Fisher: How the Frankfurt School Foresaw Capitalist Realism and What to Do About It*, London: Zer0 Books, 2021.

---

1 Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1993 (1976), p. 18.

2 Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, trans. Ariana Reines, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012 (1999), p. 24.

3 *Living in an Unreal World: A Film by Adam Curtis* (dir. Adam Curtis, 2016), Vice Media, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NzzSqHK-50.

4 For more, see Michael Robert Watson, *The Memeing of Mark Fisher: How the Frankfurt School Foresaw Capitalist Realism and What to Do About It*, London: Zer0 Books, 2021, in particular §5

Benjamin and the Digital Flaneur.

5 Adam Harper, ‘Vaporwave and the Pop-Art of the Virtual Plaza’, *Dummy*, 12 July 2012, https://www.dummymag.com/news/adam-harper-vaporwave/?fbclid=IwAR1XTf4US0LwZZPTScWNIGkNwz848rUvoyc8vGcSxWXPUCrb86P_J7hcUoc.

6 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood, London: Penguin, 2008 (1938), p. 12.

7 Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, p. 66.

8 Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, p. 36.

9 Later, t e l e p a t h released a Deluxe Box Set with six more albums.

10 Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, p. 76.

11 Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, p. 105.

11 THE BACKROOMS

On October 12, 1492, Italian explorer Christopher Columbus landed on the American continent. On July 20, 1969, American astronaut Neil Armstrong first walked on the Moon. On May 12, 2019, an anonymous user noclipped ‘out of reality’ and ended up in the Backrooms. After Christopher Columbus’ pillars of Hercules and Neil Armstrong’s Kármán line, the threshold of the Backrooms represents now the furthest *end* of the world.

At 10:07 PM on the 12th of May 2019, the anonymous user replied to a picture in a thread on 4chan's /x/ section. The image, posted in response to a call to “post disquieting images that just feel ‘off’” on imageboard website 4chan, depicted an empty office space with yellowish wallpaper and neon lighting.

In reply to the creepy image, the anonymous user wrote: ‘If you're not careful and you noclip out of reality in the wrong areas, you'll end up in the Backrooms, where it's nothing but the stink of old moist carpet, the madness of mono-yellow, the endless background noise of fluorescent lights at maximum hum-buzz, and approximately six hundred million square miles of randomly segmented empty rooms to be trapped in.’[1]

Four years after the anonymous 4chan post, 3D models of empty office spaces and shopping centers are reproduced endlessly by Internet users on Reddit, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. In analogy with the United States flag erected on the surface of the Moon, the green wallpaper and neon lights represent the reproduction of capitalism into the imaginary.

The Backrooms are an example of liminal space (the word *liminal* is from the Latin *limen*, meaning ‘threshold’). However, in contrast to other liminal spaces, places of change and passage, such as doorways, escalators, lobbies, and hotels, the Backroom spaces are means *without* end. The architecture of non-places as such.

As you noclip out of reality you do not get somewhere, but *nowhere*.

Further related to the above is the meaning of the phrase *no clipping*. In 1994 video game *Doom II: Hell on Earth*, the command IDCLIP enables the player to disable collision detection and, therefore, walk through otherwise solid objects and walls; then, the player is still inside the video game but outside of the gaming space. *To noclip* thus means to go through the gameable space and, as a result, end up outside of the map and its reality altogether.

No Escape-ism

After the map takes the place of the territory, there is *nowhere else to go*.

On the one hand, the naive optimism of flat Earth theories which argue that the map of the world ends *somewhere*: one could swim or jump over it. On the other hand, the pessimism of the Backrooms' architecture, for instance in Kane Pixels' short-film adaptation, and its everlasting reproduction. The design of capitalist realism. According to the original 4chan post, the Backrooms are as small as three times the Earth's surface area; in Kane Pixels' found footage, the Backrooms are endless.

More than a dystopia and a utopia, the Backrooms are another topos of reproduction: the capitalist utopia of any dystopia.

Also, contrary to Marc Augé's late-capitalist theory of space, where places are not effaced throughout, the Backrooms are the simulation of space too. The Backrooms do not represent the presence of another reality *elsewhere* but, rather, the absence of reality as such. The Backrooms are reproduced as if in order to hide that there is no more difference between places and non-places, subjects and spectators. It is the utopia, the u-topos, the non-place, of the screens.

Kane Pixels' *Backrooms* are nothing more than the 4D representation of an impossible exit from capitalism. Only *images* exit the Backrooms. Yet, the images are not from the present time but a lost future: recorded in 1990 and 1991, and found in 1996... Lastly, uploaded to YouTube in 2022. The future is nothing more than the repetition of the past. Meanwhile, capitalism is the only imaginary able to reproduce itself. Kane Pixels' found footage, where a research group (the A-Sync Foundation) is analyzing the Backrooms and their potential to produce *more space* (A-Space™), will be

soon developed into a feature-length film from Oscar-winning company A24. Everywhere is the spectacle and the spectacle is everywhere.

The dreams of the end are over. Yet, the nightmares never end. As the comments posted below the eerie images of the Backrooms also show, many people have been dreaming about places like the Backrooms much before the original 4chan post. It is hard not to think about Carl Gustav Jung's blood-filled dreams and visions of war, a few months before the beginning of WWI. The exception is that, today, the collective unconscious has taken the form of collective informatization.[2] Nightmares have taken the form of zeros and ones.

Kane Pixels' footage from the Backrooms also feature a tripod-looking monster, known as Bacteria: the living form of the image itself, the viral structure of the hyperreal. It is the representation of everything that, logically, wants our death.

Noclipping

Above all, it is the closure of the system that produces fascination. As Jean Baudrillard writes in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*: ‘What fascinates us is always that which radically excludes us in the name of its internal logic or perfection: a mathematical formula, a paranoic system, a concrete jungle, a useless object...’[3] not to forget the capitalist system and the Kabbalistic conception of God. This is also the fascination that authors like Nick Land and Mark Fisher developed for capitalism: an abstract system that *does not need you*.

The Backrooms are a closed system that is accessed by some fatal error: Internet’s hell. Again, in opposition to other liminal spaces, there is no exit. ‘*The Backrooms are the result of a threshold that has glitched and keeps on self-generating in a seemingly unstoppable loop*.’[4] It is noteworthy that the Backrooms went viral during the COVID-19 pandemic: yet another liminal space that takes place in both space and time and reproduces itself endlessly in accordance with the logic of virality.

‘When the concept of threshold,’ the *limen* in liminal spaces, ‘meets that of noclip, a simple boundary line can turn into a habitable place. The glitching threshold might lengthen to generate a space, and this space could switch from a transitory moment into a permanent prison.’[5]

To noclip and get out of the gaming space of capitalism, then. In addition to images and video, the Backrooms are further accessed through simulation video games where players are able to explore and interact with the surroundings. To noclip away from empty offices and shopping centers into what are now only bleak spaces. ‘No clipping through reality’ reads the intertitle of a simulation video game of the Backrooms.

Noclip through the hyperreal. Exit the gaming space and its hyperrealism. Enter noclip mode. *Collision detection* is disabled. The player is altogether outside of the authorized map and within the same gaming space: the code-cheaters are always already more than players and non-players. There is no difference between function and error anymore. All that was closed by function is now opened to critical errors. Follow the bugs after the end of the world. Noclip into *another* map. The critical race to whatever is after the end. That is the fascination of the closed system against the allure of the open system.

Later, the *error* is fixed. The software is debugged. A new patch is installed. The command line is shut down. The imaginary is returned to the reproduction of more signs. Restart. Try again. Find a new cartography.

References

Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe, London, New York: Verso, 1997 (1992).

Backrooms – Presentation (dir. Kane Pixels, 2022). YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITuGdHxHi0A.

Baudrillard, Jean. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin, London: Telos Press, 1981 (1972).

Berardi, Franco 'Bifo'. *The Third Unconscious: The Psychosphere in the Viral Age*, London, Brooklyn: Verso, 2021.

iD Software. *Doom II: Hell on Earth*, GT Interactive, MS-DOS, 1994.

Pie On A Plate Productions. *The Backrooms Game*, Pie On A Plate Productions, Microsoft Windows, 2019.

Tanni, Valentina. 'A Journey in the Back of the World in Noclip Mode', *NERO Editions*, 20 April 2022, https://www.neroeditions.com/a-journey-in-the-back-of-the-world-in-noclip-mode/.

The Backrooms (Found Footage) (dir. Kane Pixels, 2022). YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4dGpz6cnHo.

'unsettling images', 4chan [4plebs] post 12 May 2019, 1:37 PM, archived from the original on 1 February 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20220201004253/https://archive.4plebs.org/x/thread/22661164/#22661164.

---

1 Anonymous, 'unsettling images', 4chan [4plebs] post 12 May 2019, 1:37 PM, archived from the original on 1 February 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20220201004253/https://archive.4plebs.org/x/thread/22661164/#22661164.

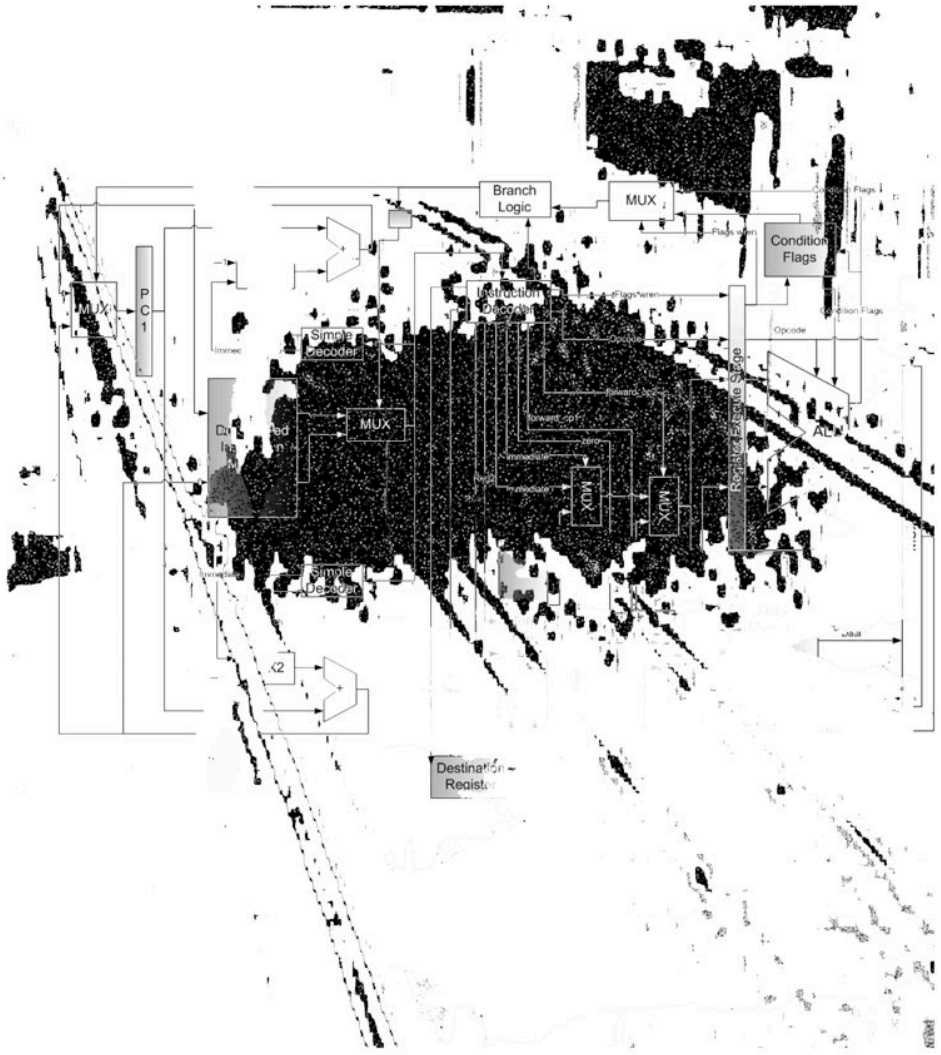
2 Compare with Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Third Unconscious: The Psychosphere in the Viral Age*, London, Brooklyn: Verso, 2021.

3 Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin, London: Telos Press, 1981 (1972), p. 96.

4 Valentina Tanni, ‘A Journey in the Back of the World in Noclip Mode’, *NERO Editions* (20 April 2022), https://www.neroeditions.com/a-journey-in-the-back-of-the-world-in-noclip-mode/.

5 Valentina Tanni, ‘A Journey in the Back of the World in Noclip Mode’.

12 THE GHOST IN ARCHITECTURE


Branch Logic
MUX
Condition Flags
PC 1
Simple Decoder
MUX
Simple Decoder
x2
Destination Register
Opcode
ALU
Register Execute Stage

In the apocalyptic movie *28 Days Later*, the sentence ‘THE END IS EXTREMELY FUCKING NIGH’[1] is written in black ink on the walls of a church. The function of the wall is not to define *space* but *time* as well. The black-ink graffito represents the time in which it is not possible to signify anything anymore; words and walls fall away like everything else. Ruin value approximates zero.

Five years later, stencil graffiti were made to advertise the next movie in the franchise. *Coming soon*… In 2007, the same year of the crisis of the banks and the crisis of the imagination of the future,[2] it was written in red ink on the walls: ‘28 WEEKS LATER… IT’S BACK EVERYWHERE.’

As the eponymous graffito ‘OUR MOTTO: APOCALYPSE NOW’ in Francis Ford Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*,[3] there is no longer any apocalypse because there is no more difference between the apocalypse and its own representation. The dark light of the ruin, upon which the graffito is written, is returned to the bright light of the screen.

The Tag of the Ghost

In graffiti slang, a *ghost* is what remains when, for whatever reason, the paint or ink has not been removed thoroughly. The graffito is going to haunt the wall… and the wall the graffito. The haunter is to be haunted in return.

To imagine the graffito on the empty walls is to reproduce the future where it is possible to imagine it, even if it is not now, not anymore.

Some of the graffiti of May 1968, as Jean Baudrillard remarked in *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, were not repainted but suppressed by political slogans and posters. The revolution of signs is not going to be removed but, instead, replaced with the signs of media. It is yet another form of vandalism: advertising takes the *place* of graffiti. The sign of politics is returned to the sign of the economy (much like the rat of Banksy and Blek le Rat, the former runs against and then within the system and the market).

The graffito reads: 'I was here.' It is then removed. The revolt is repressed. And so, it returns: 'I was here again.' The *revenant*, from the French *re-venir*, is that which always returns itself.

As Jean Baudrillard argued about New York's graffiti (such as KOOL KILLER, SHADOW 137, SUPERSEX, and KOLA), there is neither reference nor representation as such. It is the endless destruction of the sign and its system. It is not vandalism but in the *spirit* of vandalism.

Another graffito from the walls of Paris in May 1968: 'Coming soon to this location: charming ruins.'[4] Again, this graffiti writing refers to nothing more than the future that is not really future, not anymore, but already the logic of the imaginary. It is the last graffito between the end and the representation of the end.

Maurice Blanchot writes in the incipit of *The Writing of the Disaster*: ‘The disaster ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact.’[5] Graffiti do the same with walls.

‘Not Really Now Not Any More’

A graffito scrawled with lipstick after the name of two lovers: ‘not really now not any more.’

This is the graffito that inspired Alan Garner to write the bestselling novel *Red Shift*. The graffito is already drafting the book even before the book is written. The question is: *when?*[6]

Mark Fisher writes: “‘Not really now not any more’ points to the postmodern impasse, the disappearance of the present and the possibility of representing the present. But it also points to an alternative temporality, another way in which time can be out of joint, a mode of causality that is about influence and virtuality rather than gross material force.”[7] Like other graffiti from public bathrooms, railway stations, and graveyards, this is the sign of another time that is not present and fails to present itself: it is *not really now, not anymore*.

In *The Weird and the Eerie*, Mark Fisher goes further:

There is something so eerie, so cryptic, so suggestive about [the phrase ‘not really now not any more’], especially when written as an anonymous graffito. What did the nameless author of this vagabond poetry mean by it, and what did it mean to them? […] To say there was something fated about Garner’s encounter with this graffiti is to redouble the phrase’s intrinsic, *indelible* eeriness. For what does the phrase point to if not a fatal temporality?[8]

The scribble ‘not really now not any more’ is already *scribbling* with time: the graffito is *always already* about Alan Garner’s writing of the book *Red Shift*. This is strange and eerie not because of the graffito, but because there is something wrong about time. It is strange like a dream which is only later discovered to be real; it is eerie like capital itself: even if capital

is nothing, it is the force of the present, a kind of *presence* without presence. It is the failure of presence and time as such.

References

28 Days Later (dir. Danny Boyle, 2002). DNA Films, UK Film Council.

28 Weeks Later (dir. Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 2007). 20th Century Fox, Fox Atomic.

Apocalypse Now (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1979). Omni Zoetrope.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Iain Hamilton Grant, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1993 (1976).

Berardi, Franco 'Bifo'. *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012.

Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock, Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995 (1980).

Garner, Alan. *Red Shift*, London: Collins, 1973.

—. 'Alan Garner: Revelations From a Life of Storytelling', *The New Statesman*, 2 April 2015, https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/04/bronze-age-axe-space-telescope-and-art-story-alan-garner-being-made-myths.

Fisher, Mark. 'What is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly* 66(1) (Fall, 2012): 16–24.

—. *The Weird and the Eerie*, London: Repeater, 2016.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1991.

Knabb, Ken. *Situationist International Anthology (Revised and Expanded Edition)*, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006 (1981).

---

1 *28 Days Later* (dir. Danny Boyle, 2002), DNA Films, UK Film Council.

2 Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012.

3 *Apocalypse Now* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1979), Omni Zoetrope.

4 Ken Knabb, *Situationist International Anthology (Revised and Expanded Edition)*, p. 450.

5 Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock, Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995 (1980), p. 1.

6 In the section ‘Architecture’ of *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson argues that architectural space is also a form of philosophizing. But the same is true for architectural forms of time.

7 Mark Fisher, ‘What is Hauntology?’, *Film Quarterly* 66(1) (Fall, 2012), p. 22.

8 Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, pp. 90–91 (my emphasis).

13 ANTI-HAUNTOLOGY

Reebok

A ghost haunts the end: the ghost of the future.

Mark Fisher writes in *What is Hauntology?*: ‘The future is always experienced as a haunting: as a virtuality that already impinges on the present, conditioning expectations and motivating cultural production.’[1] But the future is no longer what it was. The future is not future anymore, but the return of another remix and remake. The future is dead: *undead, undead, undead.*

Listen to the Arctic Monkeys. The ghosts of rock and roll, the phantasmagoria of the past (with the lighting setup, the hairstyles, the clothing, and everything), the eternal return of the same. The Arctic Monkey’s album *The Car* is a time machine to the past. Again, to go back in time faster than light: ‘Do your time travelling through the tanning booth / So you don’t let the Sun catch you crying.’[2]

Instead, dance to the music of SOPHIE and Arca. The sounds and images of the future return in order to haunt the present. It is the sign of the apocalypse.

The end is beginning.

The Aesthetics of the Apocalypse

In 2014, Mark Fisher writes in *Ghosts of My Life*: ‘Imagine any record released in the past couple of years being beamed back in time to, say, 1995 and played on the radio. It’s hard to think that it will produce any jolt in the listeners.’[3]

The question is: what would have the late theorist thought about the sound of SOPHIE and Arca?

Replay the one hundred remixes of Arca’s *Riquiquí* created in 2020 by an artificial intelligence called Bronze. To listen to the remix album *Riquiquí Bronze Instances* is to hear the same song for the first time. The concept of remixing itself is *remixed*. It is no longer about the editing of the past but the bootleg of the future.

This is what Matt Bluemink, in opposition to Mark Fisher’s hauntology, refers to as *anti-hauntology*. The phantasms of the future, instead of the phantasms of the past, are returned to the present.

Mark Fisher’s chapter from *Ghosts of My Life* continues:

what would be likely to shock our 1995 audience would be the very recognisability of the sounds: would music really have changed so little in the next 17 years? Contrast this with the rapid turnover of styles between the 1960s and the 90s: play a jungle record from 1993 to someone in 1989 and it would have sounded like something so new that it would have challenged them to rethink what music was, or could be.[4]

Now, listen to SOPHIE’s *Oil of Every Pearl’s Un-Insides* and Arca’s *KiCk i-iiiii* and repeat the thought experiment. All in all, this music would have produced a jolt of future shock in listeners from 2007, even up to 2017.

The future is no longer what it was when Mark Fisher was writing *Ghosts of My Life*. The ghost of SOPHIE, who died in 2021, does not return from the past but from another future.

Then, the circuit between present and future, which Mark Fisher thought was destroyed by late capitalism, is rewired to the present. Like in SOPHIE's *Faceshopping* and Arca's *Mequetrefe* where the sounds and images, and even the subject, are destructed and recreated again. It is the digitalized aesthetics of the apocalypse. Sounds and images produced by means of waveform editing and computer graphics technology do not represent anything any longer but the future itself.

You have not seen or listened to anything yet.

The Media of the Future

Hauntology is about the sound of what is not present. The word *ontology* in French sounds like the word *hauntology*. The difference is read, although it is not heard.

Jacques Derrida writes the word *hauntology* only three times in the body text of *Specters of Marx*. The word returns for the fourth and last time in a footnote, where it is read: ‘every period has its ghosts (and we have ours), its own experience, its own medium, and its proper *hauntological* media.’[5] The end of the book returns to haunt the meaning of the word *hauntology*.

Hauntology is what Jacques Derrida refers to as the medium of the media. It is the mediation between the present and the future; it is about the temporality of the media, the medium of the media as such.

For Mark Fisher hauntology is, also, about the return of the analogical sign to the digital medium: the sound of crackles and black-and-white technology return like phantoms from the past.

Thus, the *analogy* between presence and representation is disrupted. ‘The digitization of the analog destabilizes our knowledge of the *this was*, and we are afraid of this,’ as Bernard Stiegler argues. ‘But we were afraid of the analog too: in the first photographs, we saw phantoms.’[6]

In the analog medium, the light of the image returns the past, and its phantom, to the sign of the present. Representation is the phantom of light. In contrast, the digital medium reproduces light as electricity, the signifier of presence and absence in the form of zeros and ones. The analog medium is the return to the present of the image of the past. Instead, the digitalized image is no longer an image but the *imagination* of an image. The digital

image and the digital sound do not return to the present the *phantoms* of the past but, rather, the *phantasms* of the future.

It is the apocalypse according to Saint Mark (Fisher).

The digital sounds and images of SOPHIE's *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* do not represent anything any longer but the imagination of another future.

Hyperpop

Hyperpop aesthetics is another example of hauntology rather than anti-hauntology. Hyperpop music is the repetition of the same. The pop culture of Britney Spears, Madonna, and Lady Gaga is plugged back into the circuitry of the present. The pop star of the future is the pop star of the past.

An apt example is the music project *QT*, produced by SOPHIE in collaboration with Hayden Dunham and A. G. Cook. *QT* is both the name of the project and the name of an energy drink, called DrinkQT, later to be sold and distributed. The music video for *Hey QT* shows the artist, QT, producing the DrinkQT energy drink in a laboratory: the emotions of the artist are reproduced into the drink formula by means of augmented reality technology. The producer of the energy drink is nothing more than the energy drink herself. There is no difference between the producer and the product. There are no longer any subjects either, but consumers.

SOPHIE's song *Lemonade* from the album *Product* is another apt example. Hyperpop music is even more pop than pop music: the sound is higher and faster, the graphics are brighter and more colorful, the lyrics are sweeter and even more materialistic. 'I get that fizzy feeling and I want lemonade, / Lemonade, l-l-lemonade, lemonade, l-l-lemonade.'[7] The rights to the song were later sold to McDonald's for the promotion of a new lemon-flavored drink.

The subject and the music of the future do not shock the system. Instead, the negative feedback returns the system to the reproduction of the same. Negative feedback is nothing more than the pleasure principle of the machine. 'The pleasure principle,' explains Nick Land, 'formats excitation as self-annulling drift from equilibrium.'[8] The negative feedback system *resets* the potential of digital technology.

The positive feedback, on the other hand, is opposite to the negative feedback system. The positive feedback is the reproduction of the sign of difference and aberration. The positive feedback system is the production of another future within the logic of reproduction. The techno-logic of the system is not crashed because now it functions *too well*. It does not reproduce the same image any longer but the signs of another imaginary.

The Spectre of the East

Hauntology is about the phantoms of the past, as well as the specters of Western culture. ‘The rude spectres of Lewisham will return no matter how far East you travel,’[9] writes Mark Fisher in *Ghosts of My Life*. The vast number of references to Asian culture in Japan’s *Tin Drum* (from the album cover to the titles and lyrics) do not exorcise the specters of the West. ‘When I’ve broken every door / The ghosts of my life / Blow wilder / Than the wind,’[10] sings David Sylvian in the song *Ghosts* by Japan, providing Mark Fisher with the title of the book.

Anti-hauntology, on the other hand, is about the phantasms of the future. It is about the presence of that which should not exist *here and now* but is present nonetheless.

Shangai-based artist Goooooose is another example of anti-hauntology. The electronic and futuristic music of Goooooose is the sign of another *future*. It is the sign that the end is not where the Sun sets. It is the sign that the future is not ending but, rather, beginning.

33EMYBW and Goooooose’s *Trans-Aeon Express* is the representation of the Oriental terminus of the future. *Trans-Aeon Express* is the soundtrack album of Weirdcore’s exhibition in SKP-S department store in Beijing, *Orient Flux*. Weirdcore is currently the director of music videos and visuals for artists such as Arca, Aphex Twin, Miley Cyrus, M.I.A., Tame Impala, Radiohead, and The Caretaker, as well as brands like Louis Vuitton, Adidas, and Nike. Weirdcore’s music video for Goooooose’s *Trans-Aeon Express* (the title track of the album released on the Chinese music label SVBKVLT) is the representation of the circuit between the popular and the experimental, the mainstream and the underground, as well as the West and the East. In the music video of Goooooose directed by the London-based artist, both

virtual and real images reproduce from the Trans-Aeon Express, a digital machine traveling through space and time at the speed of light. The phantasms of the future are reproduced into the present; the machine functions *too well* and reproduces the sign of the imaginary.

The imaginary is always that which is after all images. It is the ghost of the future that does not return to the present: it is always already present and after the end. Anti-hauntology is *against* hauntology as much as it is *after* it.

The digital music of SVBKVLT artists like Goooooose, 33EMYBW, Zaliva-D, Nahash, Osheyack, and Hyph11E is the Oriental spectrum of anti-hauntology.

After the End

In the music videos of SOPHIE's *Faceshopping* and Arca's *Mequetrefe* the sounds and images are destroyed and reconstructed again and again. Also, it is the subject that is dismantled and reassembled, as Arca and Bronze's artificial intelligence sing in *Riquiquí*: 'Regenerated girl degenerate / […] Thinking it would never end to break off.'[11]

In an article in response to Matt Bluemink's introduction to anti-hauntology, Matt Colquhoun writes:

When we argue over SOPHIE's newness, detached from the new sort of subjectivity she represented […] we undermine the radical imposition that was her bold presence as a transgender pop star. […] We reduce cultural value to a decimal point rather than asking what it is actually doing to our sense of ourselves as late-capitalist subjects. SOPHIE did that, and notably with her music.[12]

To sum up Matt Colquhoun's argument: 'The point is less about whether music itself can innovate and more about whether that innovation actually counts for anything when broader social structures remain so fixed. The point is *how* does musical innovation disrupt the system at large, intervene in it, move outside of it, push through it.'[13]

The logic of the system is pushed to its limit. But the system does not stop functioning: instead, it functions *too well*. It does not reproduce the end but the sign of the imaginary.

That is the hypernothingness of the medium according to which there is no more difference between the reproduction of the end and the reproduction of the beginning. It is the reproduction of another kind of nothingness that is more than creation and destruction, more than reality and simulation. There is then no more difference between the subject of the

present and another subject. The system reproduces its own apocalypse. The end is *both possible and impossible*. Thus, the end is returned to the sign of the imaginary.

You have not seen or listened to anything yet. It is only the start.

References

33EMYBW & Goooooose. *Trans-Aeon Express* (Shangai: SVBKVLT), 2022, LP.

Arca. ‘Mequetrefe’, 2020, track 3, on *KiCk i* (London, New York: XL), 2020, CD.

—. *KiCk i* (London: XL), 2020, CD.

—. ‘Riquiquí’, 2020, track 4, on *KiCk i* (London, New York: XL), 2020, CD.

—. *Riquiquí;Bronze Instances* (London, New York: XL), 2020, 100 files.

—. *KiCk ii* (London, New York: XL), 2021, 12 files.

—. *KiCk iii* (London, New York: XL), 2021, 12 files.

—. *KiCk iiii* (London, New York: XL), 2021, 11 files.

—. *KiCk iiiii* (London, New York: XL), 2021, 12 files.

Arctic Monkeys. ‘Body Paint’, 2022, track 5, on *The Car* (London: Domino), 2022, CD.

Bluemink, Matt. ‘Anti-Hauntology: Mark Fisher, SOPHIE, and the Music of the Future’, *Blue Labyrinths*, 2 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/02/anti-hauntology-mark-fisher-sophie-and-the-music-of-the-future/.

—. ‘Anti-Hauntology: Arca, AI, and the Future of Innovation’, *Blue Labyrinths*, 6 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/06/anti-hauntology-arca-ai-and-the-future-of-of-innovation/.

—. ‘Anti-Hauntology: Iglooghost, Mark Fisher, and the New Digital Modernism’, *Blue Labyrinths*, 12 April 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/04/12/anti-hauntology-iglooghost-mark-fisher-and-the-new-digital-modernism/.

Colquhoun, Matt. ‘Anti-Hauntology: Where Are the New Forms of New?’, *Xenogothic*, 6 February 2021, https://xenogothic.com/2021/02/06/anti-hauntology-new-forms-of-new/.

Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, London: Routledge, 1994 (1993).

Derrida, Jacques and Stiegler, Bernard *Echographies of Television. Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek, Cambridge: Polity, 2002 (1996).

Fisher, Mark. ‘What is Hauntology?’, *Film Quarterly* 66(1) (Fall, 2012): 16–24.

—. *Ghosts of My Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, Winchester, Washington: Zer0 Books, 2014.

Goooooose – Trans-Aeon Express (dir. Weirdcore, 2021). SVBKVLT, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7_5arAZpk4.

Land, Nick. ‘Machinic Desire’, in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1993), 319–344.

Japan. ‘Ghosts’, 1981, track 3, on *Tin Drum* (Los Angeles: Virgin), LP.

QT. ‘Hey QT’, 2014, track 1, on *Hey QT* (London, New York: XL), 2014, CD.

SOPHIE. ‘Lemonade’, 2014, track 1, on *Product* (Glasgow: Numbers), 2014, CD.

—. ‘Faceshopping’, 2018, track 3, on *Oil of Every Pearl’s Un-Insides* (Sydney: Future Classic, London: Transgressive Records), 2018, LP.

—. *Oil of Every Pearl’s Un-Insides* (Sydney: Future Classic, London: Transgressive Records), 2018, LP.

Weirdcore. *Orient Flux*, T-10/SKP-S, Beijing, China, 2020.

---

1 Mark Fisher, ‘What is Hauntology?’, p. 16.

2 Arctic Monkeys, ‘Body Paint’, 2022, track 5, on *The Car* (London: Domino), 2022, CD.

3 Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life. Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*. Winchester, Washington: Zer0 Books, 2014, pp. 7–8.

4 Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, p. 8.

5 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, London: Routledge, 1994 (1993), p. 241 (my emphasis).

6 Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television. Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek, Cambridge: Polity, 2002 (1996), p. 152.

7 SOPHIE, ‘Lemonade’, 2014, track 1, on *Product* (Glasgow: Numbers), 2014, twelve-inch single.

8 Nick Land, ‘Machinic Desire’, p. 327.

9 Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, p. 37.

10 Japan, ‘Ghosts’, 1981, track 3, on *Tin Drum* (Los Angeles: Virgin), CD.

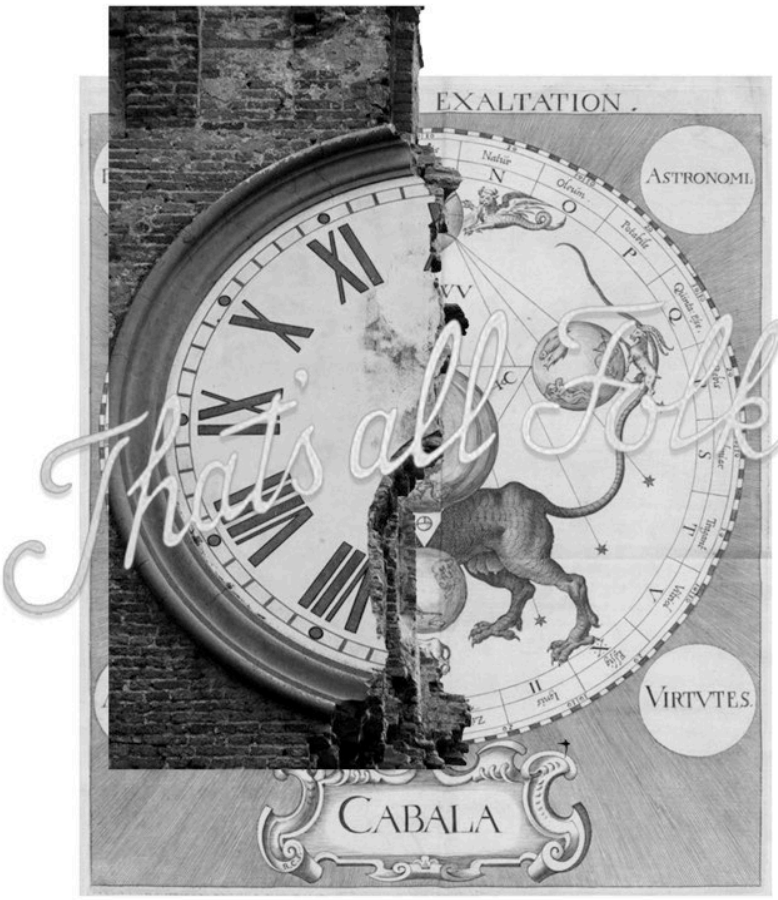
11 Arca, ‘Riquiquí’, 2020, track 4, on *KiCk i* (London, New York: XL), 2020, CD.

12 Matt Colquhoun, ‘Anti-Hauntology: Where Are the New Forms of New?’, *Xenogothic*, 6 February 2021, https://xenogothic.com/2021/02/06/anti-hauntology-new-forms-of-new/.

13 Matt Colquhoun, ‘Anti-Hauntology: Where Are the New Forms of New?’

AFTERWORD: NEW BEGINNINGS

MATT BLUEMINK


EXALTATION.
ASTRONOMI.
VIRTVTES.
CABALA
That's all Folks!

‘In a way, we must start at the end.’[1]

DELEUZE AND GUATTARI

This statement from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* brings us to a strange conclusion. If we are to start at the end, which way should we turn? If we stare for too long into the abyss of hypernothingness what will we see? To take Nietzsche seriously is to see our own reflection; to see the monster we have become, or have always been. The industrial technologies of contemporary capitalism have only served to bring this monster further out of the depths. The end is always there, looming in the darkness.

However, there is another way. A light at the end of the tunnel. *A new beginning*.

Some thinkers, writing in the twentieth century have been prophetic in terms of their predictions about the age we currently live in (e.g., Jean Baudrillard, Bifo Berardi), and some have acutely diagnosed the problems of the twenty-first century from *inside*, surrounded by the constant flux of texts and images we find ourselves immersed in every day (e.g., Mark Fisher, Byung-Chul Han). Writers like Alessandro Sbordoni occupy a unique position because their ideas have been profoundly shaped by those who came before them, yet they are part of a world that the previous generation of thinkers could only analyse from afar. In other words, they are a new generation of digital natives, analysing techno-culture from within.

‘The end,’ as Sbordoni conceptualizes it in this book, is both the symbolic embodiment of nothingness, and the grounding for *what could be*. In this regard it is reminiscent of the second division of *Being and Time*[2] in which Heidegger addresses the dual nature of death as the necessary end of Dasein, *and* as the condition for the possibility of Dasein’s existence. The end, for Heidegger, is present from the beginning.

As Bernard Stiegler explains in the documentary film *The Ister*:

> Mortality according to Heidegger is what makes my time mine such that it cannot be shared with another — nobody can die in my place — and such that it is totally indeterminate. This will lead Heidegger to say that time must be thought from the perspective of the future. My death always remains “still to come.” And hence a magnificent paradox: my death is the sole event I will never live. […] So it’s nothing but a phantom. It has never been and it will never arrive. There are nothing but phantasms.[3]

Death, the ultimate end, is therefore nothing but a phantasm for us. Hypernothingness exists only insofar as it is hyperreal. *Time must be thought from the future*. After the boredom at the end of the world, the only thing left to do is forge a way forward. Dreams of the end are only the start…

Thinking Time From the Future

There is a remarkable shift that happens in our consciousness when we truly understand Heidegger's lesson iterated by Stiegler in the quote above. To think of time *from the future* implies a whole host of existential and political questions, some of which are the most pressing we face today.

Whereas Stiegler claims that our own death only exists as a phantasm (something that will never *truly* happen to us), Mark Fisher's hauntology, taken from the same Derridean language, sees that culture has reached an impasse: we are trapped in an endless cycle of stagnation in which lost futures continually haunt us from the past. In both cases the phantasm is real in the Deleuzian sense.[4] Despite its virtuality, it exists here, now, in the present. Thus, as Sbordoni explains, this *endless* cycle is precisely the *signification of the end* itself.

Nevertheless, there is a reason why *anti*-hauntology was chosen as the final chapter of this book: anti-hauntology specifically emphasizes thinking time from the future. It implies the creation of a *new future*. It shows us a way out. Indeed, if we take Fisher's hauntology as the cultural embodiment of the end, anti-hauntology must necessarily represent the logic of new beginnings. As I wrote in 2021, 'if hauntology is the logic of despair, then anti-hauntology can be seen as the logic of hope.'[5,6]

But what exactly is the operation of this new logic? Where is the light at the end of the tunnel? Here we can combine Stiegler's theory of (trans)individuation with the accelerationist concept of hyperstition to provide an answer.

Create New Circuits!

In a 2009 interview, Nick Land summarized the concept of hyperstition, a concept that truly puts ‘thinking time from the future’ at its core. The curious thing about hyperstitional objects is (despite their ephemeral nature) their ability to affect real world change, for better or worse. As Land states:

> Hyperstition is a positive feedback circuit including culture as a component. It can be defined as the experimental (techno-)science of self-fulfilling prophecies. Superstitions are merely false beliefs, but hyperstitions — by their very existence as ideas — function causally to bring about their own reality. Capitalist economics is extremely sensitive to hyperstition, where confidence acts as an effective tonic, and inversely. The (fictional) idea of Cyberspace contributed to the influx of investment that rapidly converted it into a technosocial reality […]. The hyperstitional object is no mere figment of “social construction”, but is in a very real way ‘conjured’ into being by the approach taken to it.[7]

We have seen, time and again, these hyperstitional objects actualising themselves from the future into the present. Most recently with Meta’s contemporary reconstruction of the ‘metaverse’ from Neal Stephenson’s novel *Snow Crash*. In this case, one of the most powerful and far reaching social technology platforms decided to rebrand itself in order to focus on recreating a speculative virtual reality from a science fiction bestseller. The fictional metaverse contributed to its own actualization in the present. *Neo-California arrives from the future*.[8]

Now, if this kind of change can be affected in the realm of capital through fictional circuits from future to present, what could happen in the realm of techno-culture? What happens when new musical ideas, enabled by new technologies, paint new visions of the future? Suddenly there's a break in the darkness. The world opens up. New circuits can be re-wired. A new *epokhe* can be formed.

As Stiegler writes in *What Makes Life Worth Living*:

> An *epokhe* […] is formed via multiple circuits of transindividuation[9] through which psychic individuals co-individuate and ultimately transindividuate. This transindividuation is a matter of weaving transgenerational circuits according to the paths of every form of knowledge.[10]

Stiegler's concept of transindividuation (which is adopted and expanded from Simondon's transindividual) is about how groups of individuals collectively adopt a common past in order to project a common future and invent new ways of living. Knowledge is no longer short-circuited. Long circuits are formed across generations. Transindividuation means reaching beyond the end; reaching beyond the short-termist thinking that contemporary industrial capitalism has burdened us with; reaching for a new future in which knowledge is thought of not just in terms of its capacity to change the present, but its capacity to bring about a future we want to live in.

Anti-hauntology, in this sense, can be thought of as the formation of a new *epokhe* in the realm of culture, through transindividuation. As experimental music has started to be pushed into the mainstream, it has reached out to other 'well established' genres, inviting popular artists to draw on these sounds in innovative new ways. This move essentially means that the experimental, the avant-garde, and the popular have developed a

new relationship that would have been much more difficult to imagine even a short while ago.[11] Why is this important? Because it enables the creation of transgenerational circuits between the present and the future. The mere imagining of *the new* can be enough to bring about its own reality if it is imagined by enough people, collectively. It is in this way that anti-hauntology has the potential to act as a hyperstitional concept which can actualize a new culture, and create a *Whole New World*.[12]

Thus, in opposition to Mark Fisher, who decried in 2014 the loss of a future that was 'no longer white, male, or heterosexual',[13] we are presented with trans artists, queer artists, and artists from all corners of the globe creating and transforming the very concept of what our future could look like outside of the Western-centric, patriarchal world order. From the *Seeds of the Future*[14] sown by the experimental sounds of Gooooose and 33EMYBW in China, to the rise of K-pop, reggaeton, and afrobeats across the world, the future of popular culture has never looked more diverse.[15]

However, even though looking to Asia, Africa, or Latin America is a step in the right direction, a step away from constraints of hauntology, this kind of cultural diversity is only the start. As Deleuze and Guattari note: 'art is never an end in itself; it is only a tool for blazing life lines.'[16] The art and music discussed here may set the stage for a new future, but it is only one tool of many. The cultural production of diverse localities and their connection to a globalized future is by no means an end in itself.

In fact, the sinofuturism of SVBKVLT artists like Gooooose and 33EMYBW could be seen as a perfect example of an *accelerationist* music. *Neo-China has arrived — and it's here to stay*. Yet, if we want to situate these artists within anti-hauntology — a concept which shares many attributes with accelerationism, but sits firmly outside it[17] — we must turn to cosmotechnics as a philosophy that takes the specificities of globalism and localism seriously and shows how to move beyond them.

Cosmotechnics and Dis-*orient*-ation

In *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, Yuk Hui claims that sinofuturism as it exists in its current form, i.e. as a hypercapitalist/communist hybrid with 'Chinese characteristics', is ultimately an acceleration of the European modern project which has taken hold across the world.[18] To conceptualize a new future requires moving beyond this project in such a way that the local takes on a new significance, not merely in the form of a reutilization of indigenous knowledge or vernacular aesthetics, but as inherently tied to, and reflective of, the global. As Hui writes:

> [T]oday, the task of overcoming modernity through modernity brings us to the question of specificity and locality. Locality is not the reassuring alternative to globalization, but its "universal product". If we want to talk about locality again, then we must recognize that it is no longer an isolated locality […] but must be a locality that appropriates the global instead of being simply produced and reproduced by the global. The locality that is able to resist the global axis of time is one capable of confronting it by radically and self-consciously transforming it — rather than merely adding aesthetic value to it.[19]

Overcoming modernity *through* modernity recognizes the same philosophical imperative that underlies anti-hauntology. Localized aesthetics are not enough to counter the aesthetics of the apocalypse. In order to move beyond modernity as it exists now — trapped in its Backrooms and virtual plazas, haunted by digital ghosts symbolising the

end — we must reconceptualize what localization means in relation to globalization.

Indeed, the Backrooms and their liminal counterparts are a perfect example of a Westernized subconscious made real through the digital image; they are a specifically *localized* dystopia that has become global. The disquieting nature of the Backrooms is a by-product of Western industrial capitalism's infiltration into the very concept of space. Hell, for the contemporary urbanized consumer in China, Europe, and America, is no longer fire, flames and eternal damnation, but the endless drudgery and *disorientation* of the office environment.

However, as Hui notes: '"Disorientation" does not mean simply that one has lost one's way and doesn't know which direction to choose; it also means the incompatibility of temporalities, of histories, of metaphysics: it is rather a "dis-*orient*-ation."'[20]

Here, Hui's play on words works on multiple levels. The first refers to the malaise diagnosed by Stiegler in *Technics and Time 2,* which places disorientation at the center of his critique of contemporary industrial capitalism.[21] The second highlights the loss of grounding that so-called 'oriental' societies have, according to Hui, been going through since the slow embracing of the European modernist project from the nineteenth century onwards.

The drudgery of the Backrooms, this boredom at the end of the world, is no longer limited to the West; it is slowly transmuting itself into a universal concept. We merely need to look at China's *tǎng píng* (literally 'lying flat') movement, which advocates a simple way of life, rejecting the typical hyper-competitive lifestyle many young Chinese urbanites are forced into, to see this in action. Here, like similar movements that have taken place in other parts of the world, many of the urban youth in China are seeking a form of resistance against the disorientation that arises from the combination of Western industrial capitalism and Chinese collectivist

history, which, Hui claims, also implies a loss of metaphysical grounding. So, perhaps *tǎng píng* can be seen as a short-lived remedy to the dual notion of dis-*orient*-ation, but it is not a long-term solution. The malaise of the end is ever present.

Here it is useful to remember the words of David Graeber who claimed that 'the world we inhabit is something we made, collectively, as a society, and therefore, that we could also have made differently.'[22] The point raised by Hui, which also underlies anti-hauntology, resonates strongly with Graeber's statement. To Hui, different ways of imagining the world — our different thought structures and cosmologies — have an active effect on the technics of the future. This new form of thinking is what Hui calls 'cosmotechnics'. It emphasizes that our scientific and technical thinking emerges under cosmological conditions that are expressed in the relations between humans and their milieus. These relations are never static. They can always be reimagined.[23]

Therefore, in order to reappropriate modern technology away from the Western industrial model, the first requirement is to reconfigure the fundamental metaphysical grounds that underpin our understanding of technologies in general; the second is to reconstruct a new episteme upon this ground which will serve as the condition for technical invention, development, and innovation, in such a way that these innovations will no longer be mere imitations or repetitions of Western industrial technologies.[24] This cosmotechnical approach to the creation of a new future would allow contemporary societies across the world to re-*orient* themselves not only temporally (in relation to the past and the future) but spatially and technologically (in relation to their cosmological milieu). It is the first step in overcoming modernity and moving past the techno-logic of the end.

So, where do we go from here? With anti-hauntology breaking down the temporal specificities of cultural production, and cosmotechnics re-

imagining the local and the global, what future can we now imagine? What new language will be made with the semiotics of the end? The future is ours to make. This afterword has sought to take on board the lessons of Deleuze and Guattari and ‘start at the end’, but of course, this is only one small step (for man) in the right direction, it is up to us collectively to decide where to take the giant leap (for mankind). To conclude, I will leave my readers with another quote from Yuk Hui; a philosopher who understands this all too well. As he writes at the end of his book:

> One will certainly have to understand science and technology in order to be able to transform them, but after more than a century of “modernisation”, now is the moment to seek a new form of practice, not only in China but also in other cultures. For China addressed in this book is only one example, and only one of many possibilities. This is where imagination should take off and concentrate its efforts.[25]

Let us use our imagination to concentrate our efforts away from the logic of despair, towards the logic of hope. Only then can we rewrite the future after the end.

Coda

In the post-internet world, a multitude of technical realities are brought into existence through the imagination of cosmotechnical futures.

The Western industrial world order is no longer an approximation of the end.

National borders still exist, yet the individual and the collective are no longer spatially constrained.

Long circuits of individuation shoot off in infinite directions across state lines.

Eastern anti-hauntology breaks through the great (fire)wall of China.

> *AI designed vernacularism.*
> *Solarpunk imaginaries.*
> *Cyberspace merges into meatspace.*
> *The culture of the future is both localized and truly global.*
> *All aboard the Trans-Aeon Express.*
> The revolution will be digitized.

References

33EMYBW. ‘Seeds of the Future’, track 6, on *Arthropods* (Shangai: SVBKVLT), 2019, 10 files.

Berardi, Franco ‘Bifo’. *And: Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication*, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, 2014.

Bluemink, Matt. ‘Anti-Hauntology: SOPHIE, Stiegler, and the Ruins of Accelerationism’, *Blue Labyrinths*, 9 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/09/anti-hauntology-stiegler-and-the-ruins-of-accelerationism/.

—. ‘Anti-Hauntology: Dancing With Ghosts and Education’, *Blue Labyrinths*, 13 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/13/anti-hauntology-dancing-with-ghosts/.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Bloomsbury, 1994.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Fisher, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, London: Zer0 Books, 2014.

Graeber, David. *Bullshit Jobs: The Rise of Pointless Work and What We Can Do About It*, London: Penguin, 2019.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

Hui, Yuk. *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2016.

Land, Nick. ‘Hyperstition: An Introduction’, *Orphan Drift*, 2009, https://www.orphandriftarchive.com/articles/hyperstition-an-introduction/.

—. ‘Meltdown’, in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1994), 441–460.

SOPHIE. ‘Whole New World / Pretend World’, track 9, on *Oil of Every Pearl’s Un-Insides* (Sydney: Future Classic, London: Transgressive Records), 2018, LP.

Stiegler, Benard. *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

—. *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross, Cambridge: Polity, 2013.

Stiegler, Benard and Rogoff, Irit. ‘Transindividuation’, *e-flux 14* (March 2010), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61314/transindividuation/.

The Ister (dir. David Barison and Daniel Ross, 2004). David Barison and Daniel Ross.

---

1 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, p. 272.

2 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962.

3 *The Ister* (dir. David Barison and Daniel Ross, 2004), David Barison and Daniel Ross.

4 ‘The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. *The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual*. Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: “Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract.”’ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Bloomsbury, 1994, p. 272.

5 Only later did I realize how well this logic echoes Franco Berardi’s own writings on the *Phenomenology of the End*. As he states at the beginning of the book:

In a rhizome there is no beginning and no end, according to Deleuze and Guattari, who propose to view reality as an infinite rhizome, an open concatenation of and and and.

This is why I’m writing the phenomenology of the end.

There is no end. One may take this assertion as a source of endless despair, one may take this assertion as a source of endless hope.

This (non)duality of the rhizomatic approach Berardi uses here also set the stage for my own fightback against hauntology and its underlying logic of despair. To my mind, when presented with ‘the end’ as Berardi and Sbordoni conceptualize it, we are forced to choose the latter path; the logic of hope. Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the*

Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, 2014, p. 9.

6 Matt Bluemink, 'Anti-Hauntology: Dancing With Ghosts and Education', *Blue Labyrinths*, 13 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/13/anti-hauntology-dancing-with-ghosts/.

7 Nick Land, 'Hyperstition: An Introduction', *Orphan Drift*, 2009, https://www.orphandriftarchive.com/articles/hyperstition-an-introduction/.

8 In his essay 'Meltdown', Nick Land famously stated 'Neo-China arrives from the future' as a reference to how hyperstitional theory-fictions can produce their own reality. The future imagined in 1994 has, in some ways, been actualized. Nick Land, 'Meltdown', in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1994), p. 441.

9 For more on Stiegler's concept of transindividuation, see Bernard Stiegler and Irit Rogoff, 'Transindividuation', *e-flux*, 2010, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61314/transindividuation/.

10 Bernard Stiegler, *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology*, trans.Daniel Ross, Cambridge: Polity, 2013, p. 123.

11 Matt Bluemink, 'Anti-Hauntology: SOPHIE, Stiegler, and the Ruins of Accelerationism', *Blue Labyrinths*, 9 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/09/anti-hauntology-stiegler-and-the-ruins-of-accelerationism/.

12 SOPHIE, 'Whole New World / Pretend World', track 9, on *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* (Sydney: Future Classic, London: Transgressive Records), 2018, LP.

13 Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, Washington: Zer0 Books, 2014, p. 28.

14 33EMYBW, 'Seeds of the Future', track 6, on *Arthropods* (Shangai: SVBKVLT), 2019, 10 files.

15 Of course, many of these genres are firmly rooted in the culture industries, yet their success implies the potential for the beginnings of a new anti-hauntological paradigm, as the next subsection discusses.

16 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 187.

17 Matt Bluemink, 'Anti-Hauntology: SOPHIE, Stiegler, and the Ruins of Accelerationism'.

18 Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics*, p. 297.

19 Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, p. 307.

20 Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, p. 296.

21 '[N]ot only does the invention of that brave new world quickly named "progress" no longer seem to be the spontaneous bearer of the future but, for the majority of the world's population—Occidental as well as Oriental, it seems to lead nowhere—when it is not a nightmare. And as for those trying to lead it, every day we see further evidence of their impotence. Such is contemporary disorientation.'Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 1.

22 David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs: The Rise of Pointless Work and What We Can Do About It*, London: Penguin, 2019, p. 238.

23 Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, p. 18.

24 Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, p. 307.

25 Yuk Hui, *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, p. 312.

REFERENCES

100 Gecs. ‘Money Machine’, 2019, track 2, on *1000 Gecs* (Lafayette: Dog Show), 2019, LP.

28 Days Later (dir. Danny Boyle, 2002). DNA Films, UK Film Council.

28 Weeks Later (dir. Juan Carlos Fresnadillo, 2007). 20th Century Fox, Fox Atomic.

33EMYBW. ‘Seeds of the Future’, track 6, on *Arthropods* (Shangai: SVBKVLT), 2019, 10 files.

33EMYBW & Goooooose. *Trans-Aeon Express* (Shangai: SVBKVLT), 2022, LP.

A$AP Mob with Juicy J. ‘Yamborghini High’, 2016, track 1, on *Cozy Tapes: Vol. 1: Friends* (New York: ASAP Worldwide, New York: Polo Grounds, New York: RCA), 2016, CD.

Agamben, Giorgio. *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009 (2006).

—. *The Fire and the Tale*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Apocalypse Now (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1979). Omni Zoetrope.

Arca. ‘Mequetrefe’, 2020, track 3, on *KiCk i* (London, New York: XL), 2020, CD.

—. *KiCk i* (London: XL), 2020, CD.

—. ‘Riquiquí’, 2020, track 4, on *KiCk i* (London, New York: XL), 2020, CD.

—. *Riquiquí;Bronze Instances* (London, New York: XL), 2020, 100 files.

—. *KiCk ii* (London, New York: XL), 2021, 12 files.

—. *KiCk iii* (London, New York: XL), 2021, 12 files.

—. *KiCk iiii* (London, New York: XL), 2021, 11 files.

—. *KiCk iiiii* (London, New York: XL), 2021, 12 files.

Arctic Monkeys. ‘Body Paint’, 2022, track 5, on *The Car* (London: Domino), 2022, CD.

Aristotle. *Parva Naturalia*, trans. David Ross, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.

Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe, London, New York: Verso, 1997 (1992).

Avengers: Infinity War (dir. Anthony J. Russo and Joseph Russo, 2017). Marvel Studios.

Avengers: Endgame (dir. Anthony J. Russo and Joseph Russo, 2019). Marvel Studios.

Backrooms – Presentation (dir. Kane Pixels, 2022). YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITuGdHxHi0A.

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard, London: Vintage Books, 2000 (1980).

Basinsky, William. *The Disintegration Loops* (New York: 2062), 2002, CD.

—. *The Disintegration Loops II* (New York: 2062), 2003, CD.

—. *The Disintegration Loops III* (New York: 2062), 2003, CD.

—. *The Disintegration Loops IV* (New York: 2062), 2003, CD.

Baudrillard, Jean. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin, London: Telos Press, 1981 (1972).

—. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, Iain Hamilton Grant, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1993 (1976).

—. *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994 (1981).
—. *The Illusion of the End*, trans. Chris Turner, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994 (1992).
—. 'The Violence of Images, Violence against Images', trans. Paul Foss, *ArtUS* 23 (22 June 2008).
Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999 (1982).
—. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood, London: Penguin, 2008 (1938).
Berardi, Franco 'Bifo'. *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation*, trans. Arianna Bove, Erik Empson, Michael Goddard, Giuseppina Mecchia, Antonella Schintu, and Steve Wright, London: Minor Compositions, 2009.
—. 'Cognitarian Subjectivation', *e-flux* 20 (November 2010), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/20/67633/cognitarian-subjectivation/.
—. 'Baroque and Semiocapital', trans. Arianna Bove, Melinda Cooper, Erik Empson, Enrico, Giuseppina Mecchia, and Tiziana Terranova, in Gary Genosko and Nicholas Thoburn (eds) *After the Future*, Edinburgh, Oakland, Baltimore: AK Press, 2011, 97–120.
—. *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012.
—. *And: Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication*, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, 2014.
—. *Heroes: Mass Murder and Suicide*, London, New York: Verso, 2015.
—. *The Third Unconscious: The Psychosphere in the Viral Age*, London, Brooklyn: Verso, 2021.
Blanchot, Maurice. *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. Ann Smock, Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995 (1980).
Bluemink, Matt. 'Anti-Hauntology: Mark Fisher, SOPHIE, and the Music of the Future', *Blue Labyrinths*, 2 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/02/anti-hauntology-mark-fisher-sophie-and-the-music-of-the-future/.
—. 'Anti-Hauntology: Arca, AI, and the Future of Innovation', *Blue Labyrinths*, 6 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/06/anti-hauntology-arca-ai-and-the-future-of-of-innovation/.
—. 'Anti-Hauntology: Dancing With Ghosts and Education', *Blue Labyrinths*, 13 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/13/anti-hauntology-dancing-with-ghosts/.
—. 'Anti-Hauntology: SOPHIE, Stiegler, and the Ruins of Accelerationism', *Blue Labyrinths*, 9 February 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/02/09/anti-hauntology-stiegler-and-the-ruins-of-accelerationism/.
—. 'Anti-Hauntology: Iglooghost, Mark Fisher, and the New Digital Modernism', *Blue Labyrinths*, 12 April 2021, https://bluelabyrinths.com/2021/04/12/anti-hauntology-iglooghost-mark-fisher-and-the-new-digital-modernism/.
Captain Marvel (dir. Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, 2019). Marvel Studios.
Colquhoun, Matt. 'Anti-Hauntology: Where Are the New Forms of New?', *Xenogothic*, 6 February 2021, https://xenogothic.com/2021/02/06/anti-hauntology-new-forms-of-new/.
Cope, Julian. *Japrocksampler: How the Post-War Japanese Blew Their Minds on Rock 'n' Roll*, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2007.

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Ken Knabb, London: Rebel Press, 1992 (1967).
Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton, New York: Bloomsbury, 1994.
Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
Demers, Joanna. 'Ambient Drone and Apocalypse', *Current Musicology* 95 (Spring, 2013): 103–112.
—. *Drone and Apocalypse: An Exhibit Catalog for the End of the World*, London: Zer0 Books, 2015.
Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, London: Routledge, 1994 (1993).
—. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore, London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997 (1967).
Derrida, Jacques and Stiegler, Bernard *Echographies of Television. Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek, Cambridge: Polity, 2002 (1996).
Donnie Darko (dir. Richard Kelly, 2001). Flower Films.
Ferenczi, Sándor. *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality*, trans. Henry Alden Bunker, London, New York: Routledge, 2018 (1924).
Fisher, Mark. 'The Damage is Done', *k-punk*, 13 January 2007, http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/2007_01.html.
—. 'No Future 2012', *k-punk*, 13 May 2008, http://k-punk.abstractdynamics.org/archives/010368.html.
—. 'What is Hauntology?', *Film Quarterly* 66(1) (Fall, 2012): 16–24.
—. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, London: Zer0 Books, 2014.
—. *The Weird and the Eerie*, London: Repeater, 2016.
—. 'Lecture Three: From Class Consciousness to Group Consciousness', in Matt Colquhoun (ed) *Postcapitalist Desire: The Final Lectures*, London: Repeater Books, 2021.
Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. James Strachey, The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 4. London: Pelican, 1976 (1900).
—. 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', trans. James Strachey, in *The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 11: On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, London: Pelican, 1987 (1920), 269–338.
Garner, Alan. *Red Shift*, London: Collins, 1973.
—. *'Alan Garner: Revelations From a Life of Storytelling', The New Statesman*, 2 April 2015, https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/04/bronze-age-axe-space-telescope-and-art-story-alan-garner-being-made-myths.
Godzilla vs. Kong (dir. Adam Wingard, 2021). Legendary Pictures.
Goooooose – Trans-Aeon Express (dir. Weirdcore, 2021). SVBKVLT, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7_5arAZpk4.
Graeber, David. *Bullshit Jobs: The Rise of Pointless Work and What We Can Do About It*, London: Penguin, 2019.
Graham, Rhys. '*Outer Space*: The Manufactured Film of Peter Tscherkassky', *Sense of Cinema* 12 (February 2001), https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2001/cteq/outer/.
Han, Byung-Chul. *The Burnout Society*, trans. Erik Butler, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015 (2010).

—. *Saving Beauty*, trans. Daniel Steuer, Cambridge, Medford: Polity Press, 2018 (2015).
—. *Capitalism and the Death Drive*, trans. Daniel Steuer, Cambridge, Medford: Polity, 2021 (2019).
—. 'The Tiredness Virus', *The Nation*, 12 April 2021, https://www.thenation.com/article/society/pandemic-burnout-society/.
Harper, Adam. 'Comment: Vaporwave and the Pop-Art of the Virtual Plaza', *Dummy*, 12 July 2012, https://dmy.co/news/adam-harper-vaporwave.
Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Science of Logic*, London: Routledge, 2010 (1812).
Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, New York: Harper & Row, 1962.
Hern, Alex. 'Netflix's Biggest Competitor? Sleep', *The Guardian*, 18 April 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/apr/18/netflix-competitor-sleep-uber-facebook.
Hess, Daniel. 'Les Rallizes Dénudés: The Psychedelic Music Behind the Mayhem', *Perfect Sound Forever*, August 2021, https://www.furious.com/perfect/lesrallizesdenudes2.html.
Hosono, Haruomi. *花に水* [*Watering a Flower*] (Tokyo: 冬樹社), 1984, cassette.
Hui, Yuk. *The Question Concerning Technology in China*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2016.
iD Software. *Doom II: Hell on Earth*, GT Interactive, MS-DOS, 1994.
Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1991.
Japan. 'Ghosts', 1981, track 3, on *Tin Drum* (Los Angeles: Virgin), LP.
Kant, Immanuel. 'The End of All Things', trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni, in Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (eds) *Religion and Rational Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 (1794), 221–231.
Knabb, Ken. *Situationist International Anthology (Revised and Expanded Edition)*, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 2006 (1981).
Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language. A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, Leon S. Roudiez, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989 (1977).
Land, Nick. 'Hyperstition: An Introduction', *Orphan Drift*, 2009, https://www.orphandriftarchive.com/articles/hyperstition-an-introduction/.
—. 'Machinic Desire', in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena*, Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1993), 319–344.
—. 'Meltdown', in Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (eds) *Fanged Noumena*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012 (1994), 441–460.
Les Rallizes Dénudés. *'67-'69 Studio et Live* (n.p.: Rivista Inc.), 1991, CD.
—. *Heavier Than a Death in the Family* (not on label), 2002, CD.
—. 'Strung Out Deeper Than the Night', 1977, track 1, on *Heavier Than a Death in the Family* (not on label), 2002, CD.
Living in an Unreal World: A Film by Adam Curtis (dir. Adam Curtis, 2016). Vice Media, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0NzzSqHK-50.
Menkman, Rosa. *The Glitch Moment(um)*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2011.
Morton, Timothy. *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Norman, Donald A. *The Design of Everyday Things. Revised and Expanded Edition.* Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 2013 (1967).

Open Your Eyes (dir. Alejandro Amenábar, 1997). Canal+ España, Las Producciones del Escorpión, Les Films Alain Sarde Lucky Red, Sociedad General de Televisión.

Outer Space (dir. Peter Tscherkassky, 1999). P.O.E.T. Picture Production.

P0es1s. :(){ :|:& };: Ascii Forkbomb, 2002, http://www.p0es1s.net/en/projects/jaromil.html

Pie On A Plate Productions. *The Backrooms Game*, Pie On A Plate Productions, Microsoft Windows, 2019.

Plato. 'Republic', trans. Paul Shorey, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (eds) *The Collected Dialogues of Plato. Including the Letters*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, 575–844.

QT. 'Hey QT', 2014, track 1, on *Hey QT* (London, New York: XL), 2014, CD.

reddit_irl. Sorry We Crashed Your SuperbOwl Party, Reddit post, 8 February 2021, 12:26 AM, https://www.reddit.com/r/blog/comments/leznyw/sorry_we_crashed_your_superbowl_party/

Risset, Jacqueline. *Sleep's Powers*, trans. Jennifer Moxley, New York: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2008 (1997).

Russell, John. 'Abysmal Plan: Waiting Until We Die and Radically Accelerated Repetitionism', *e-flux* 46 (June 2013), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/46/60096/abysmal-plan-waiting-until-we-die-and-radically-accelerated-repetitionism/.

Russell, Legacy. *Glitch Feminism*, London, Brooklyn: Verso, 2020.

Shannon, Claude E. 'The Mathematical Theory of Communication', in Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998 (1949), 29–108.

Sharknado (dir. Anthony C. Ferrante, 2013). Syfy Films.

Slow Motion TV. 'William Basinski — Disintegration Loop 1.1 (Time-Stretched Version) 8h 27m 15s', YouTube video, 23 August 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bdXjVM1aMgA.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*, London: Penguin, 2003.

SOPHIE. 'Lemonade', 2014, track 1, on *Product* (Glasgow: Numbers), 2014, CD.

—. 'Faceshopping', 2018, track 3, on *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* (Sydney: Future Classic, London: Transgressive Records), 2018, LP.

—. *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* (Sydney: Future Classic, London: Transgressive Records), 2018, LP.

—. 'Whole New World / Pretend World', track 9, on *Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides* (Sydney: Future Classic, London: Transgressive Records), 2018, LP.

Spears, Britney. 'Till the World Ends', 2011, track 1, on *Femme Fatale* (New York: Jive), 2011, CD.

Spider-Man: Far From Home (dir. Jon Watts, 2019). Columbia Pictures, Marvel Studios, Pascal Pictures.

Stiegler, Benard. *Technics and Time 2: Disorientation*, trans. Stephen Barker, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009.

—. *What Makes Life Worth Living: On Pharmacology*, trans. Daniel Ross, Cambridge: Polity, 2013.

Stiegler, Benard and Rogoff, Irit. 'Transindividuation', *e-flux 14* (March 2010), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/14/61314/transindividuation/.

Sutherland, Keston. *The Odes to TL61P*, London: Enitharmon Editions, 2013.
Svenonius, Ian. ‘Time is Money’, in G. Gill (ed) *The Psychic Soviet: And Other Works*, Chicago: Drag City, 2020 (2006), 135–146.
Tanni, Valentina. ‘A Journey in the Back of the World in Noclip Mode’, *NERO Editions*, 20 April 2022, https://www.neroeditions.com/a-journey-in-the-back-of-the-world-in-noclip-mode/.
Thacker, Eugene. ‘Dark Media’, in Alexander R. Galloway, Eugene Thacker, and McKenzie Wark (eds) *Excommunication: Three Inquiries in Media and Mediation*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013, 77–150.
—. *In the Dust of This Planet: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 1*, London: Zer0 Books, 2011.
—. *Starry Speculative Corpse: Horror of Philosophy, Vol. 2*, London: Zer0 Books, 2015.
The Backrooms (Found Footage) (dir. Kane Pixels, 2022). YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4dGpz6cnHo.
The Caretaker. *Everywhere at the End of Time – Stages 1-3* (Kraków: History Always Favours the Winners), 2017, 3 CDs.
—. *Everywhere at the End of Time – Stages 4-7* (Kraków: History Always Favours the Winners), 2019, 4 CDs.
The Entity (dir. Sidney J. Furie, 1982). American Cinema International.
The Ister (dir. David Barison and Daniel Ross, 2004). David Barison and Daniel Ross.
The Strokes. ‘The End Has No End’, 2003, track 10, on *Room on Fire* (New York: RCA), 2003, CD.
The Turin Horse (dir. Béla Tarr and Ágnes Hranitzky, 2011). T. T. Filmműhely.
‘The Void’, *Fandom*, 2017, https://redditplace.fandom.com/wiki/The_Void, accessed 18 March 2023.
Tiqqun. *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, trans. Ariana Reines, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2012 (1999).
—. *The Cybernetic Hypothesis*, trans. Robert Hurley, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2020 (2001).
Tzu, Sun. *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.
‘unsettling images’, 4chan [4plebs] post 12 May 2019, 1:37 PM, archived from the original on 1 February 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20220201004253/https://archive.4plebs.org/x/thread/22661164/#22661164.
Vanilla Sky (dir. Cameron Crowe, 2001). Cruise/Wagner Productions, Vinyl Films, Summit Entertainment Sogecine.
Virno, Paolo. *An Essay on Negation: For a Linguistic Anthropology*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa, Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2018 (2013).
Virtual Dream Plaza. 仮想夢プラザ [Virtual Dream Plaza] (n.p.: Ephemera Archives), 2017, 31 cassettes
Wark, McKenzie. *Capital Is Dead: Is This Something Worse?* London, Brooklyn: Verso, 2019.
Watson, Mike. *The Memeing of Mark Fisher: How the Frankfurt School Foresaw Capitalist Realism and What to Do About It*, London: Zer0 Books, 2021.
Weirdcore. *Orient Flux*, T-10/SKP-S, Beijing, China, 2020.
West, Kanye with Kid Cudi. ‘Welcome to Heartbreak’, 2008, track 2, on *808s & Heartbreak* (New York: Roc-A-Fella, New York: Def Jam), 2008, CD.

Westphal, Yannick. ‘Hacking Art’, *INC Longform*, 9 February 2022, https://networkcultures.org/longform/2022/02/09/hacking-art/.

What is a Group? (dir. Ian Svenonius, 2016). Strawberry City, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Izlj7-T5S4&t=281s.

Žižek, Slavoj. *Living in the End Times*, Brooklyn: Verso, 2010.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. 5 Violence Against the Imaginary

Fig. 1. Kanye West, ‘Welcome to Heartbreak’, directed by Nabil Elderkin, 2:11.
Fig. 2. Kanye West, ‘Welcome to Heartbreak’, directed by Nabil Elderkin, 2:14.

Fig. 3. Claude E. Shannon, ‘Schematic Diagram of a Correction System’ from ‘The Mathematical Theory of Communication’, *American Journal of Psychology*. Copyright 1968, 1949, 1998 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Used with permission of the University of Illinois Press.

3. 10 Welcome to the Virtual Plaza

Fig. 4. Virtual Dream Plaza, ‘I Need You’.
Fig. 5. Virtual Dream Plaza, ‘You and I Forever’.
Fig. 6. Virtual Dream Plaza, ‘Dream Girl’.
Fig. 7. Virtual Dream Plaza, ‘Beyond the Dream’.

4. 11 The Backrooms

Fig. 8. Huuxloc, ‘A Screenshot of a Digital Model of “The Backrooms”’. Model by Huuxloc, CC BY 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en), via Wikimedia Common. Source: https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/backrooms-another-level-429f3c9ea8024f5e9bb78f6649c7bd26.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alessandro Sbordoni was born in Cagliari in 1995. He is the author of The Shadow of Being: Symbolic / Diabolic (2nd edition, Miskatonic Virtual University Press, 2023). He is an editor of the British magazine Blue Labyrinths and the Italian magazine Charta Sporca. He works for the Open Access publisher Frontiers.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

In place of locusts, plagues and horse riders, the end appears to us as rising sea-levels, nuclear war, or A.I. uprisings. While this impending doom ought to frighten us more, it has become blasé, even comedic, for capital has captured our teleological imaginations, and has sold our demise right back to us; as we suspend our belief in its existence, our entire relationship with the future has changed.

Yet, where Mark Fisher's cancellation of the future leaves us feeling helpless, the work of Alessandro Sbordoni attempts to reverse this hauntological approach through a restoration of the potenza of the future as a nothingness that nonetheless haunts us; feedback from the future guides the present. If there is an end, it is also a beginning, which means the future is still up for grabs.

This book contains thirteen essays reflecting on capital's relationship with its own end, from cultural analyses of Britney Spears, Donnie Darko or the Internet's Backrooms, to strategic theories that frame culture as a series of weapons to be used to subvert and change the cultural hegemony of our time, and ward off the ghosts of the past."

Having been originally published, in its first edition, by Institute of Network Cultures in Amsterdam, Becoming Press has prepared, at the author’s request, a second edition of this work, which includes an afterwork written by Matt Bluemink, to whom we attribute the term “anti-hauntology”. This is still the second edition of the book, but a new version of it which mainly involved a redesign of the book to be in line with Becoming's 2025 style.

Publisher
© Becoming Press
Nicosia/Berlin, 2025
All rights reserved.

hello@becoming.press
https://becoming.press
@becoming.press

CatNo: (becoming)06B
ISBN: 978-9925-8118-7-8
Second Edition, October 2025

Author
Alessandro Sbordoni

Design & Typography
(Becoming)
Claire Elise
& Polymnia

A CIP record for this book is available from the Cyprus Library.

© The works of the authors and designers were made available exclusively for this project. All rights to these works remain with their respective creators. Any other use of reproduction is prohibited, without the written permissions of the editor, author, designer and publisher.

Disclaimer:

The publisher assumes no responsibility for the accuracy of all information. The publisher and editor assume that material that was made available for publishing is free of third-party rights. Reproduction and storage require the permission of the publisher. Photos and texts are welcome, but there is no liability. Signed contributions do not necessarily represent the opinion of the publisher or the editor.

Every reasonable attempt has been made by the editor, authors and publisher to identify owners of copyright. Should any errors or omissions have occurred, please notify us.

In regard to images used, every reasonable attempt has been made to follow the fair-use framework.

This file was downloaded from Z-Library project

Your gateway to knowledge and culture. Accessible for everyone.

z-library.sk z-lib.gs z-lib.fm go-to-library.sk

Official Telegram channel

Z-Access

https://wikipedia.org/wiki/Z-Library